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BIBLE CHILDREN

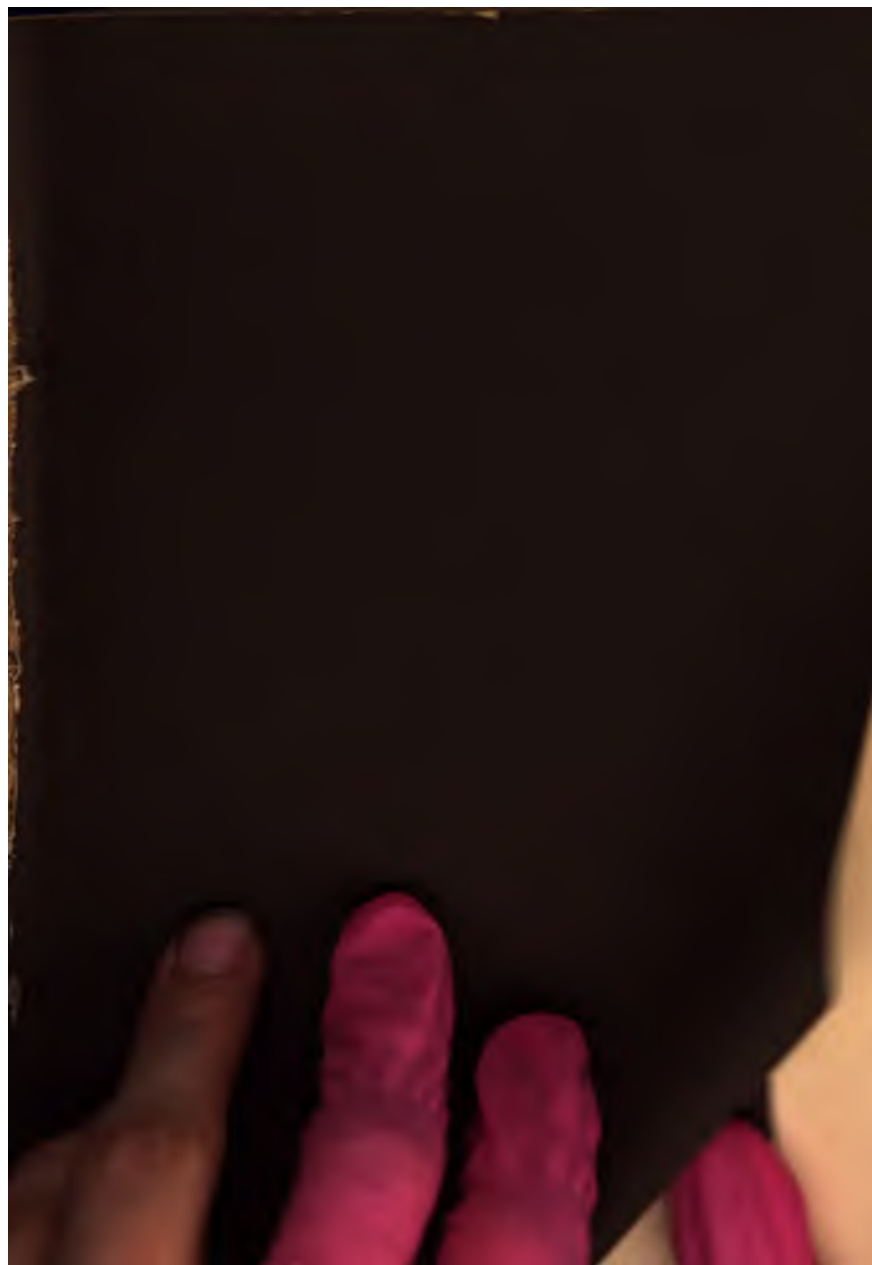


BY THE
REV. JAMES WELLS



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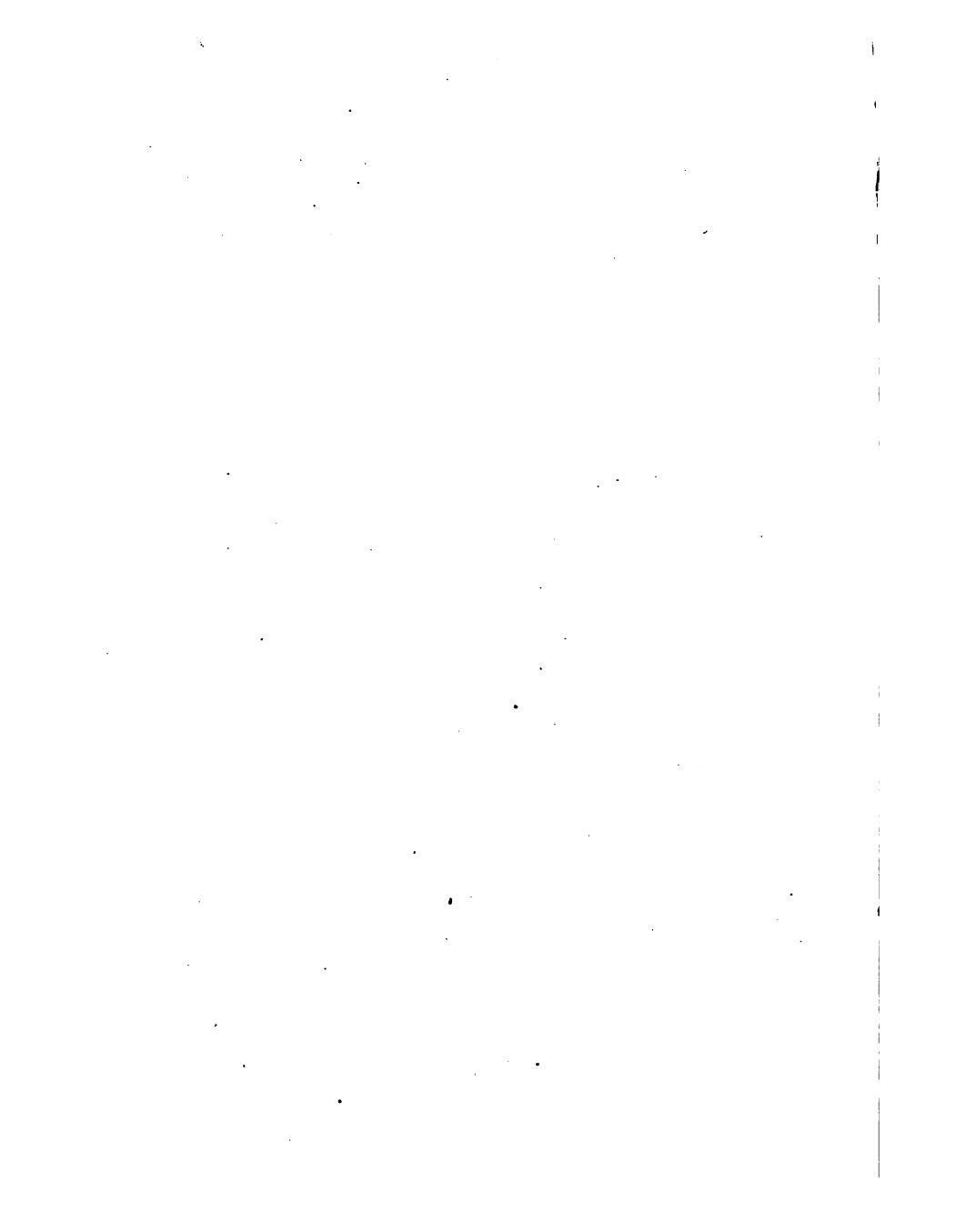
BIBLE CHILDREN.

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BIBLE CHILDREN.







THE CHARIOT OF THE SOUL

Frontispiece.

See page 34.

BIBLE CHILDREN:

STUDIES FOR THE YOUNG.

BY THE REV. JAMES WELLS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "BIBLE ECHOES."



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PREFACE.

THE twenty addresses in this book were delivered, substantially as they now stand, during the last two years at a monthly Sabbath Service for the young. The writer's purpose was, to collect the most popular pictures of child-life in the Bible, and to interpret them for our youth, in the light of the present day. Two or three in the list, however, are children in the Hebrew rather than in the modern sense of the word ; and two or three others have been followed into their riper years. The method of division is explained by the preacher's desire that even his younger hearers should carry away the substance of each address, and also by the fact that a few suitable verses were sung at the close of each division. From the favourable reception given to a previous volume, "Bible Echoes," it appears that books of this class are in request for cottage and mission meetings, and for household gatherings. The hope of again ministering to such in-

teresting audiences has suggested the publication of these pages.

May the Friend of children, Whose words, "feed my lambs," have not been withdrawn, graciously own this effort to obey one of His chief commands to His Church on earth.

J. W.

POLLOKSHIELDS, *October, 1879.*





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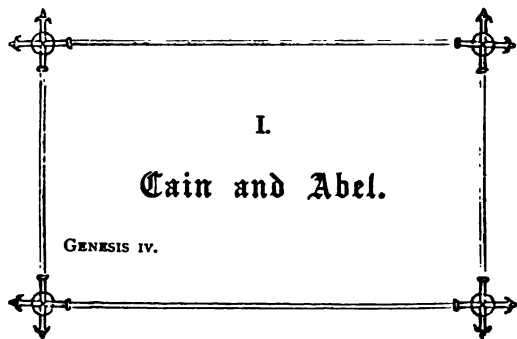
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I.

Cain and Abel.

GENESIS IV.





THE other week a company of workmen were preparing the foundations for a house in Rome. They laid bare a child's sepulchre which was at least two thousand years old. The diggers were touched with kindly feeling as they unearthed a large number of objects belonging to dolls' house-keeping. The treasure would have given as much joy to their own little girls as it gave to its first possessor. More than one visitor has been moved to tears yonder in the museum at Naples by finding, among the curiosities dug out of Pompeii, a long row of children's savings' banks with a slit in the top to let in the money. In one of our far-off islands I have visited a grey tower which was built by the Picts nobody knows how long ago. The antiquarians found a boy's toy-boat in the deep earth inside. Two peas are hardly more like each other than that boat is like the boats our boys scoop out of a piece of wood. Such facts—and you may gather thousands of them—prove that children are just children in every age and nation. Differing a little in dress,

in the way of speaking, and in the colour of the skin, all have the same beating heart : all are of one kith and kin. In every one the heart-blood is red : in every one the same eager desires dwell. Be sure that all the Bible children are real boys and girls like yourselves. What matter though they are separated from you by thousands of years? You may still embrace them in heart, and love them as if you had actually known them. I wish you had some of that fine spirit, or genius, which great historians have, by which they unite themselves to those whose acts they describe. You would then count none of these children a foreigner. Their story would make you all alive with interest, grieved at their wrongs, and thankful for their deliverances. You would find out which of them was most like you ; and in their history, as in a glass, you would discover your own. Then these dry bones in the book would be clothed with flesh, and live before you, and these Bible stories would be as fresh to you as they were to the first Hebrew boy or girl whom they filled with wonder, love, and joy.

In books about orphanages, we often meet on the first page a pair of boys' portraits,—the one in rags, the other well-clad. Thus two living pictures of boy-nature, sketched by the Divine hand, are hung up at the door of Revelation, to be gazed upon by children, while the world standeth. For every one is a Cain or an Abel : a child of darkness, or a child of light. We meet a more pleasing pair of brothers on the threshold of the New Testament,—Andrew and Peter coming to-

gether to Jesus. The Old Testament begins with a beacon, the New with a shining example, for brothers.

May the blessed gospel, which makes friends of friend and foe, unite all brothers in heart and history. A teacher of the old world used to give his scholars a sort of object-lesson. On the sand he drew a gigantic Y, to explain temptation, virtue, and vice. Starting from the bottom of the letter, he showed that there was one plain path up to the point where the two limbs parted. There stands the tempted, debating which of the two ways he shall take : the way of vice on the left, or of virtue on the right. That letter may also serve as a picture of the life of the first brother-pair, who walked together for a little, and then took paths which were separated by an ever widening distance.

Our address has thus three parts—

I. The Two Together.

II. The Two Apart

III. The Two Destinies.

I. The Two Together.—In the first and second verses of the fourth chapter of Genesis, Moses acts as Registrar of the first two human births in the world. Cain and Abel were thus the first two boys in the world's history. For Adam never was a boy : he stepped forth as a perfect man, fresh from the Creator's hand. So the two boys had no playfellows of their own age. Nursed at the same

breast, fondled in the same lap, protected by the same care, having the same sports,—the same everything, the little fellows, if not twins by birth, were more than twins in everything besides. Hand in hand, they passed together through all the wonders and joys of childhood. What a training they had from the penitent Adam and Eve! what lessons through eye and ear! Their home was in Eden, though not in the Garden of Eden, for Eden was a wide district in the centre of which stood God's garden, or paradise. I think of them as living near the garden, just as the boys in the Porter's Lodge live near the Mansion House. Perhaps they fished in rivers that ran from Eden. Their own father and mother had seen and talked with God and Satan. Think with what feelings these quick-witted boys heard of God's love, the tree of life, the accursed serpent,—they might almost hear his hiss,—the fall, and all its woes. For anything I know, they gazed on the identical Cherubim warning them off, and the Sword flaming over the barred gate. Yes, they might stop short in their gambols, and let the playthings drop from their hands from very fear. Every divine thing was very near and very real to the boys. Surely two brothers so joined by holy ties can never be sundered from each other, or from God. But they are nearing the point where their one way branches out into two. Now they are at it! Lo, the one turns to the right, and the other to the left, and we must now follow—

II. *The Two Apart.*—Jude says that some in his

day were walking "in the way of Cain." Now what is the way of Cain?

1. It is the way of the *formalist*. A formalist has the *form* of religion without its power. Cain had the right form; and he worshipped the true God; and his religion cost him a great deal: but it had no reality, no life, no value in the eyes of God. It was all show, like a bad nut that cheats you in the woods in Autumn. The beautiful shell hides a wizened or rotten kernel. A clever man in our mission district showed me how he made the wax figures he exhibited. He greatly enjoyed my surprise at the little bit of wax it took to make a man. By pawning an old coat he could buy wax enough to make a whole family. With the thinnest waxen skin he covered hands and face, and mere straw and shavings did the rest. When the hero's day was done, his hands and face were melted; and some other noted character, fashioned out of the same half-handful of wax, reigned in the window in his stead. Is there any likeness between you and that man of wax? Is any one a man of God only as he was a man of wax? Is your Christianity all made for you by another? Is it merely skin-deep, covering only the outside and visible parts of life, while sin and self claim all the rest for their own? If so, you have gone in the way of poor Cain; and the Lord will not have respect unto you or your offering.

2. *Utter selfishness* is also a token of the way of Cain. Selfishness comes out in all he says and does. He is envious (ver. 5), because Abel's offering is accepted, and

his is not. He has no generous joy in a brother's success: he won't learn by a brother's example. Thus he "was of that wicked one," for he envied Abel's happiness, just as Satan had envied Adam and Eve in Eden. He grows sullen and gloomy; and his countenance falls. God reasons with him (ver. 6), and warns him (ver. 7). Take care, Cain. Sin croucheth at your door, like a cruel, cunning beast of prey. Watch lest he spring upon you and devour you. But Cain heeds not. By his hatred he had wronged Abel; and now, like every wrong-doer, he hates him more for the wrong he has done him. They are talking in the field, Abel perhaps reasoning in brotherly love, when Cain's anger grows fierce even to slaying. Perhaps he did not mean it: probably he did not know that his blow would be deadly; for he had never seen the death of a man. Earth then held no grave. Death is a great Reconciler. The sight or thought of death melts the hardest heart, and in a moment turns a foe's fury into pity. Were you ever so moved as by the death of a brother or sister whose image was wedded to all the bright scenes of your childhood? But it is not so with selfish Cain. For, to the Lord's question, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" he makes reply in sullen scorn, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Abel's death has not slain Cain's selfishness. Now, do not think that Cain is a monster, the like of whom will never be seen again. For Jude tells us that some professing Christians in his day had gone in the way of Cain; and the Apostle John warns his friends against becoming

murderers in heart like Cain. If you hate any of your relatives because they are good, if you cannot bear their religion, if your heart is growing more selfish, then be warned. "Sin lieth at your door," and you have gone pretty far in the way of Cain; and that way is like the path that is lost in the quicksands, or broken short by the sea: it ends in ruin.

3. The way of Cain is the way of *the godless among the godly*. He was the godless son of godly parents, the wicked brother of righteous Abel. Bound to God's throne by all the bonds of blood, boyhood, and brotherhood; bound by the strange ties of great nature and greater grace, he yet set the example to all the rebels against the Anointed, who say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." People wonder that the children of Christians sometimes turn out so ill; but after Cain's case we need wonder at nothing. Yet his case is not half so surprising as the case of his parents or of the evil angels. Some of you are like Cain in this: you are in a Christian family, and have your Abel,—one very near you who has gladly given himself to God. What do you mean to do? Frankly face the question. Will you break through all these sacred ties? Will you say, "My mother's Saviour shall not be mine?" Will you make of no avail the oft-repeated dedication of you to God by your father and mother? It is a woeful thing to bid defiance to all the gentle influences of a Christian home, and to wrench your heart away at once from your Father in heaven and

your father on earth. Yet some boys and girls do it. "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain." Woe, woe, for they have gone far in it.

With glad relief we turn to the way of Abel. It is the way of *faith*. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. xi. 4). Abel trusted in God and believed all the words of God, and took the way of God in everything. And so he brought the right sacrifice, in the right spirit, to the right altar. And he yet speaketh to you. Standing by his altar, his voice comes down through all the ages, and tells you of the one sacrifice whose blood cries for greater good things *for* us than Abel's cried for evil things *against* Cain. You know for certain the name of that "more excellent sacrifice." Its name at once rises to your lips : it is Christ, who hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Cain trusted only in his own righteousness ; but Abel had the same spirit of faith, though not the same fulness of knowledge, as Christians now have. Hence he points you to the Lamb of God, and teaches you to glory only in the cross of Christ.

And Abel's faith had many *fruits* ; for (ver. 4) he brought of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof. The firstlings were the first-born, and the fat thereof were the fattest and finest of them. As soon as he had anything to give, he gave his best to the Best. His offerings were the earliest, the freshest, and the richest he could bring. Be like him in faith, and fattest firstlings. Without faith, all gifts are nothing, though you should give your body

to be burned ; but true faith makes you righteous before God, and your gifts well-pleasing to Him. "And what are my firstlings," do you ask ? They are your fresh young heart and life. Oh, do not wait till, trembling with old age, you can bring only the dregs, the miserable fag-end, and cold leavings of a wasted life. What ! would you wait till all the freshness and fatness is taken out of you ? Will you not, like Abel, come at once, and come with your very best ? I have now to place side by side—

III. *Their Two Destinies.*—The tares and wheat in our Saviour's parable were sown at the same time in the same field ; and both had the very same soil, sunshine, and showers. Yet by a strange law the wheat took in only what suited its nature, and rejected all the rest ; and the tares did likewise. What we have there as parable, we have here as history. Your destiny, then, is shaped more by the state of your heart, than by your circumstances ; for these two boys were in the same circumstances. Who could have guessed that murderer and martyr were of one mother ? Alas ! they differed, not as Heaven and Earth but as Heaven and Hell differ. How solemn that brothers, so near in place and blood, should stand so far apart in spirit and destiny !

"He only can the cause reveal,
Why, at the same fond bosom fed,
Taught in the selfsame lap to kneel
Till the same prayers were duly said,

Brothers in blood and nurture too,
Aliens in heart so oft should prove ;
One lose, the other keep, Heaven's clue ;
One dwell in wrath, and one in love."

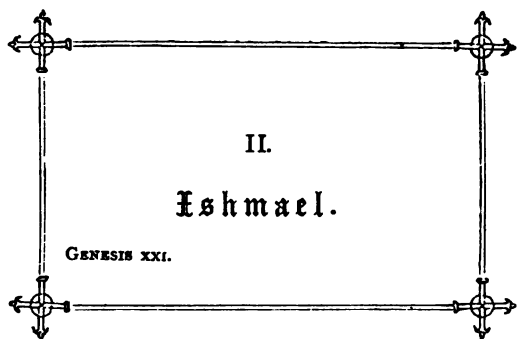
Behold in Cain the terrors of the soul that cuts itself off from God's pardoning mercy. Cain, like you, had a conscience : and conscience had Cain, and made him its trembling, branded slave. The hue and cry of heaven was after him ; and, to his affrighted ear, its echo filled the whole earth. He fled from his sorrowing parents, and from the scene of his crime ; and would fain have fled from himself. But, "what exile from himself can flee ?" One has said, "The world is full of fugitives from themselves ;" that just means, there are many unresting Cains in the world. He was afraid that every one he met would slay him. There were few people in the world then, few certainly in the land of Nod whither he fled ; yet to his guilty soul the world seemed filled with avengers of his brother's blood, and so terror was his companion all the way. Poor Cain ! When he wished to fly from God, he should have fled to God, and he would have been protected against himself. He should have hid in God, instead of hiding from God. But he believed and said that there was no forgiveness for him. "Thou liest, Cain," replies one of the fathers, "for God's mercy is greater than all man's misery."

About Abel's end we are told nothing. We only see him perishing in pain. His must have been a cruel death : the earth opened her mouth to receive his blood.

But it matters not where, or when, or by what pain the first martyr died. Enough that he had lived well. Enough that he died the death of the righteous. Enough that he lives for ever in heaven. And it matters little how you die, if only you die in the faith of Abel. But if you would die his death, you must live his life. Your chief concern, then, should be, not how you may end, but how you may spend your days. You know the offering God accepts: it is the offering God has provided for you. Put all your trust in Christ who "hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." Bring Him also your firstlings, and the fat thereof,—the firstlings of head, heart, and hands. Then shall it be Christ for you to live, and gain to die. Amen.







II.

Ishmael.

GENESIS XXI.





THE Bible is like a picture gallery with many children's portraits which draw a crowd around them. In this book we linger opposite the most popular of these portraits. And now we face Ishmael. He was a boy about fourteen when he was cast out of Abraham's house, along with Hagar his mother. She took the common road to Egypt, her home : she knew no other place to go to. That road she had often travelled before, but now, blinded with grief and rage, she loses the way. Their piece of bread and bottle of water are soon done, and they give up hope. Behold the mother and her boy at the point of death ! I wish you to think of—

I. The Outcast.

II. The God of the Outcast.

III. The Angel of the Outcast.

IV. The Allegory of the Outcast.

I. The Outcast.—The boy, right glad of the change, bounds along like a young stag ; but in a day or two

raging thirst subdued him. He was as a child from very weakness : he could neither walk nor stand. But hate of Sarah and love of her boy made Hagar strong enough for anything. So "she cast the child under one of the shrubs" (ver. 13). She clave unto him as the one joy and hope of her heart. The bodies of a mother and child were found among the ruins of Pompeii. The child's face was flattened against the mother's breast ; in the hour of danger she had so closely pressed her darling to her heart. Great nature was the same in Hagar, but she dared not embrace her fainting boy, for that would have smothered him. She is in a strait betwixt two. She cannot bear to see him die, and she cannot bear to be far from him. "And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot ; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept." We have sadder scenes than that near home. No mother weeps over the young Ishmaels in the wilderness of the great city, nor does an angel show them a well of water. These are children robbed of their childhood, whom care and want have made little men and women before they have been boys and girls. I saw one of them smiting his fellow, who threatened to tell the police : he had no other to redress his wrongs. The other day I saw two of them huddled up together at the door of an office in town. Poor boys, in the dead of winter their feet were bare, and red, and swollen, and cracked ; and their gaping rags exposed their

breasts to the stinging blast. Sorrow, I suppose, had been their only Schoolmaster ; and their wits had been sharpened on the grindstone of necessity. They had more heads than caps, but they laid their one cap on the cold flagstone, and twisted their four feet together in it for warmth. They talked loudly, and now and again burst into a hollow laugh. Like the boy who whistles along the road in a dark night to make himself believe that he is fearless, so they laughed to cheat themselves into the notion that they were cheery. Some of them die of cold, and hunger, and a broken heart. We call such children "City Arabs," and as they grow older, "Ishmaels." As Abraham is the father of all the faithful, so the Arab Ishmael is the father of all our outcasts. He was an impudent boy, who mocked his betters, and became "a wild ass of a man," whose hand was against every man. Do not wonder that some poor children are like Ishmael in their feelings, as in their fate. Do not wonder if scorn and cruelty and want turn them into Arabs and Ishmaels. If you wisely consider their case, you shall be very patient and pitiful towards them. How terrible for a child with all your feelings to be treated as they are ! Man or woman's misery is nothing compared with the misery of outcast little children. The other day I came upon a bird-catcher who was spreading his snares in the snow. He told me that the birds naturally dreaded the snares, and were caught only when their strong fear was conquered by their stronger hunger. The snarer of souls likewise plies his work among the

starving. Four out of every five robberies in London, it has been proved, are due to hunger. Why, let the best trained and best tempered dog be a starving outcast for a few days, and it is a snarling wolf. It is hunger that drives men and women into the most shameful sins. What are we to think, then, of the poor children who have not even a Hagar to soften them into love, who are weeping when you are laughing, who are starving when you are feasting, who shiver in rags under the pelting storm, while you are flannelled and furred from top to toe, and who are as homeless as our Saviour was in the days of His flesh? What wonder if they count society a cruel step-mother who has turned them out of doors, as Sarah turned out Ishmael? What wonder if they are maddened into hatred of both the living and the dead, who, they fancy, agreed in hating them! Respect them for their great sorrows: take them into your pity: let them find a home in your heart at any rate. For are we not all outcasts, the children of Adam the outcast? Are we not the followers of Him who makes the outcasts of earth the inmates of heaven?

You would think kindly of poor children if you knew their feelings. A poor boy, as he himself said lately in public, often stood at one of our *close* mouths starving for bread and kindness. He often wondered why the people going past to church never spoke a word to him. He then resolved that if he became a man he would do what he could for poor orphans. He has kept his word; and to-day hundreds of orphans call him blessed. Ah

yes, I know that some of the noblest young hearts beat under rags.

II. The God of the Outcast—The God of the Bible stands forth as the Father of the fatherless, the orphan's shield, and the outcast's guardian. The highest kindness is to be personally interested in us, and to meet our wishes and wants. And God showed such kindness to Ishmael. He might well say with David, "Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." The wonder is that young outcasts can live at all; yet somehow they are brought through. God who feeds the young ravens, forsakes not the young Ishmael. "And God heard the voice of the lad." He was too weak to speak; but his faint sigh entered into the ear of God. Notice: it was the voice of the *lad*, not of the mother, that God heard. God pities most those who most need pity; and so should you. Who can be more wretched than our young outcasts? Probably there was no true faith in Ishmael's cry. He had been a wild, godless boy, and now it is nature borrowing the cry of faith in a time of need. Yet God hears him. And you should not shut your ear against the cry of the helpless, simply because they are ill-doing, and have no special claim upon you. Where should you and I have been if God had dealt with us after that sort? When Ishmael is before you, try to be godlike.

This boy's name shows that God heard his mother

and him ; for Ishmael means, "he whom God hears." Were earth like heaven, and man like God, every Ishmael might add to his name the surname, "Ishmaadam," which being interpreted is, "heard of man."

"Oh may our sympathising breasts,
The generous pleasure know,
Kindly to share in others' joy,
And weep for others' woe.
When the most helpless sons of grief
In low distress are laid,
Soft be our hearts their pains to feel,
And swift our hands to aid."

We have now come to—

III. The Angel of the Outcast.—Children often sing, "I would I were an angel." Well, it is a part of angels' work to cheer and save the outcast.

"For men on earth no work can be
More angel-like than this."

How kindly this angel spake to Hagar! "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad." These bright and blessed spirits put their hearts into such errands. A church near Dijon contains a monument with a group of the Bible prophets and kings, each holding a scroll of mourning from his writings. But above is a circle of angels who look far sadder than the prophets whose words they read. They see more in the sorrows than the men below them see. Thus the angels see the whole of the sins and sorrows of the young, and so rejoice more than we can do over the work of God among them. It may be in your power to

act as a good angel to some outcast. The orphans of society are cast upon the fatherhood of God ; and He wishes them to be the children of the Church, and the children of your adoption. He who pities you, teaches you to pity them ; and the sorrows you sincerely pity, you will try to heal. It will often cost very little to cheer a poor child. "What can I do for you?" a lady once asked a weeping orphan. "Oh, ma'am, you can aye speak a kind word to me, for I have no mother like the rest of them." I had better give you one or two cases in which fainting outcasts have been revived and cheered as Ishmael was by the angel. Sir Humphry Davy was once asked to give a list of his great discoveries. He mentioned one discovery, and another, and added, "But the greatest of all my discoveries is Michael Faraday." He was a poor boy in his employment, whom he encouraged, and who became one of the great men of our day. He who discovers a good mind hidden under deep poverty, and helps it, is among the greatest of modern discoverers. Every Christian worker among the poor may hope to make this splendid discovery. That fainting boy under the shrub is to become the father of a great nation, and mould millions in his own image. All the Arabs or Bedouins have sprung from him, and like father like family. They are a world's wonder ; for down to this day they are all like Ishmael, untamed, wild, and lawless ; and they were for centuries the Masters of the East. Many children who are like Ishmael in poverty, are like him also in the rich gifts which

poverty hides, and which might be made useful, if some one would be as an angel to them, and fetch to their fainting hearts the cool, sweet water of encouragement. One day a gentleman, standing at his window, noticed an organ boy in the street. He called him in and asked if he would like to be educated. "Yes," was the eager reply. He was educated; he became a Christian, and is now an honoured preacher. Once more, Dr. Guthrie was at a meeting where a speaker described his ragged-school children as "the scum of the country." When the Doctor's turn for speaking came, he seized a sheet of writing paper lying on the table, and, holding it up, said, "This was once 'the scum of the country,'—once foul, dirty, wretched rags. In it—now white as the snows of heaven—behold an emblem of the work our Ragged Schools have achieved!" I once saw a beautiful specimen of that work. At the close of a service in the Scotch Church, New York, a very respectable-looking man, with his wife and two or three children, came to speak to me. He asked eagerly about Dr. Guthrie, and deeply regretted that he had not been able to make out his intended visit to America. He then used, as nearly as I can recollect, the following words:—"I was a friendless orphan on the streets of Edinburgh, and no orphan's prospects were then darker than mine. I was one of the first boys that Dr. Guthrie took into his school; and all I have for time and eternity I owe to that school. It has been one of the great desires of my life to shake hands with Dr. Guthrie, and thank him be-

fore I die." I remember that he swung his Bible at arm's length, to give emphasis to his words.

Surely that is angels' work, the work of heaven on earth, the work of God among men. Do you not wish that you may have a share in it some day? It will bring you a rich reward, even on earth. It will gain you the imperishable gratitude of some human heart. For every Christian who befriends poor children, can say—

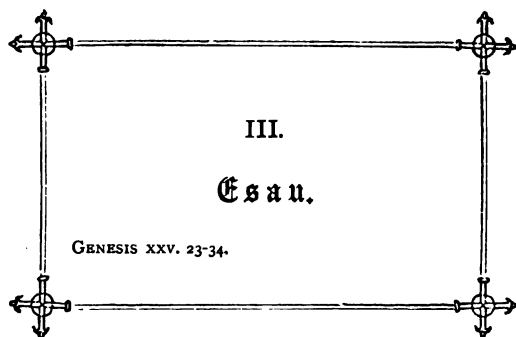
"I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning :
Alas ! the gratitude of men,
Hath often left me mourning."

A friend of young Ishmaels lately died in America. On the day of his death a little Italian flower girl brought him her offering of grateful love : it was the finest flower in her basket. A sweeter smelling flower earth had not for him : it was a part of the promised blessing for the bed of languishing of him who considereth the poor. That flower was worth more than all that genius and wealth could have given to the dying man. Now for—

IV. The Allegory of the Outcast.—Speaking of Ishmael, the Apostle Paul says, "which things are an allegory." It is no mistake to make an allegory of this part of his story also. Allegory is a big word, but it is a Bible word; and you must know its meaning. An allegory is a kind of parable : it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an

allegory, and the greatest allegory in the world. Look at that lad in the desert perishing of thirst, and a fountain at his side. Though you are, thank God, no Ishmael in the ordinary sense, are you not a spiritual Ishmael to-day—a self-made, self-willed outcast from your Heavenly Father, a hapless young wanderer upon life's highway, perishing of thirst at the side of the fountains of living water? Oh, is that your case? Earth is a sandy desert, which holds nothing that can slake your soul's thirst. But Christ Jesus has opened the fountain of life. There it is at your very side!

A boy I knew was on his way to church one beautiful Sabbath morning. He had been painfully trying to make his heart better, but he had failed. There then stole over his mind a view, a just view, of the grace of God and the love of the Saviour. Lo, there within his reach was the water his thirsty soul had been seeking as if it were far off. He drank of it, and was satisfied. By one movement of surprise and delight he had passed into the kingdom. Both old and young are sometimes in this way surprised into the new life. Be sure that there is no wilderness without this well; for Jesus Christ still stands and cries, as on the great day of the feast, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." Be very sure that the water of life is as near you as the well was near Ishmael. May God open blind eyes that they may see it, and stoop down, and drink, and quench their thirst, and live for ever!







ESAU and Jacob were twin-brothers ; but, like Cain and Abel, they were not twin-spirits. I take Esau to have been the most popular boy in the whole country side. He had splendid health and great strength ; he was bold and dashing ; he was frank and warm-hearted. He had none of Jacob's sneaking meanness: he was manly in everything. "A cunning hunter" also, he was very skilful and successful in the chase. He knew all the haunts and habits of wild beasts, and the best ways of catching them. His was the steady eye that quells the lion. He was so good at hunting, that, I suspect, he was good at nothing else, like that young nobleman who gave the philosopher a drive round the race-course at Athens. He showed the sage that, though his horses had been at full gallop, his chariot wheels had made a perfect circle on the sand. "Enough," said the sage, "you have done that so well as to convince me that you are good for nothing else." Yet Esau stands forth the hero and darling of his class, excelling in the accomplishments so dear to our boys.

And to more than our boys ; for some of the largest, most excited, and most brilliant companies in England gather around men whose feats resemble Esau's. These are men of the field, mighty men among dogs and horses.

Jacob was a home-plant ; and he used to sit by the hearth and cook red pottage. Pottage just means porridge. To-day it is a common and favourite dish in Syria and Egypt. It is made of lentils, that is, small peas ground into flour, and boiled in a pot ; hence its name, *pottage*. Some people wish to bring this same "pottage of lentils," into use here in these hard times. Thus shop-windows are placarded with "lentils" in big letters. Well, late one night Esau came home from the chase, wearied, hungry, and out of humour. No game that day ! Hardy as he was, he was ready to drop down : he was "faint." In the tent they lived from hand to mouth ; for they had no food laid by in a cupboard, ready for use, as you have. Esau must get some of Jacob's pottage, or fast till morning. Just as he came in, the savoury smell of the pottage entered his nostrils, and overcame him. "Feed me," he gasped out, "with that *Edom*." Edom is the Hebrew for red, and the pottage was reddish. He had not breath or patience to say "that red pottage." Hunger halved the sentence. The boy's nicknames I knew in my school-days usually arose out of a single laughable act. And thus Esau got his nickname, which became by and by his common name. That *red*, that Edom stuck to him and his. You find it

to-day on the maps. Jacob, the mean fellow, knew his man, and saw his chance,—“Sell me this day thy birthright.” Esau’s birthright was what he had by right of birth as the first-born. It had also to do with God and heavenly things. To be the eldest son was a greater thing then than it is now even among rich nobles. Have you ever come home at night, wet and weary, hungry and disappointed? Were you ever more short-tempered than then? Such was Esau’s mood. A child of nature, without self-control, he said peevishly, “Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” He spoke in scorn, as if to say, “Can I feed on promises?” So he sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way, simply wiping his mouth as if he had done nothing unusual. He wished Jacob joy of his unseen blessing. Esau’s dark story gives a softening feeling of pity to every reader. Jewish legends tell that Abraham died the very day on which Esau sold his birthright. His sin is condemned in both the Old and New Testaments. It was, that he did not believe in a life which is more than meat: he cared for the perishing body, but not at all for the imperishable spirit. As a man he bitterly regretted the choice of his boyhood. But to rue a bargain is not to change it.

Now Esau is not merely a wonder and a terror like the monsters of geology you see in museums. He represents all who are merely children of earth. His saying is now a proverb for every one who prefers earth’s

joys to heaven's treasures. There are still many Esaus, and many young Esaus in the world. Old age makes them hard, and sour, and unlovely ; but in youth they pass for fine fellows : they are so gay, and full of spirit and well liked. Oh God, may thy grace drive the Esau out of my heart !

Notice these four Esaus—

I. The Swearer.

II. The Worldling.

III. The Money-lover.

IV. The Drunkard.

I. The Swearer is the first, and perhaps the worst, of Esaus. For far less than a morsel of meat, for a few nasty words, he sells his birthright. In Heb. xii. 16, Esau is called "a profane person," and it is curious that the word is now applied only to swearing. *Profane* means, in front of a *fane* or temple ; that is, common ground which all may tread. All inside the temple was sacred, and to be touched only with holy awe. He is thus profane who counts nothing sacred, but calls all things common and unclean. He throws down every fence of holy awe, and would turn God's sacred enclosure into a trodden waste. And profane talk is the talk of one who has no fear of God before his eye. As Belshazzar in his revels used the sacred vessels of the Temple as drinking cups, so the swearer uses the loftiest names for the vilest purposes. Is he less profane, is he

less a daring insulter of heaven than the king whom God smote in His wrath? Is the handwriting against him less terrible, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain?" I read lately that in the Indian (Iowa) language there are no profane words, no light ways of speaking of the great Spirit. How these Red Indians condemn many Britons! I believe that the reason why the word profane is now given only to swearing is, that of all profane things, it is most profane, when you think how little is gained by it. For the swearer insults God Almighty for the sake of uttering a few vulgar words, which surely have no sweet music in them. Every right-hearted boy and girl shudders at this sin. Hate it for its horrid rudeness and coarseness, and hate it for its exceeding sinfulness.

II. The Worldling, who lives only for this world, is another Esau. You have been formed for God, and Christ Jesus, and heaven; but if you make light of these you sell your birthright for one morsel of meat. It matters not what earthly thing you set your heart on, for you may play Esau in many ways. I once heard a medical Professor describing a very sad case in a lecture. A rich young man consulted him about a spot on his tongue. It was cancer. The Professor told him that all the Doctors in the world could not cure him unless he gave up smoking. He promised to do so, but did not. The Professor pled, setting before him his birthright on the one hand, and certain death on the

other. Again and again he promised, but owned at last with tears that he could not give up his cigar. He died a cruel death. He did deliberately with his eyes open what Esau did on the spur of the moment.

Now there is by nature an Esau in every heart; for we are all of Adam and Eve, who sold, or at least lost, their birthright for an apple. It is as if two souls lodged in your body. This truth is beautifully illustrated in the picture at the beginning of this book. Plato likens our soul to the charioteer of a winged chariot with a white and a black horse. Conscience and reason are the driver's hands which grasp the reins. The horses are an ill-matched pair. The black horse is earth-born, and would drag the chariot down to the dust: the white horse is of heaven's breed, and turns towards its home; for it scents the heavenly pastures from afar. The driver's task is to lead the two abreast up the slope of heaven. You may check and curb the black horse, while you give a free rein to the white; or you may favour the black horse till he drags the white down to earth. Esau reined in the white, and encouraged the black horse as much as he could; and so the chariot of his soul was wrecked against earthly things. His body became the tyrant of the soul, whereas it should have been the soul's humble slave.

But do not run away with the notion that young Esaus are found only among shockingly wicked boys. Gentle girls may be thorough Esaus at heart. A young lady, a friend of M'Cheyne's, declared, "that she was

determined to keep by the world." He wrote a poem on the Esau-like folly and sadness of her choice. It began thus—

"She has chosen the world
And its paltry crowd,—
She has chosen the world,
And an endless shroud !
She has chosen the world,
With its misnamed pleasures,—
She has chosen the world,
Before Heaven's own treasures."

III. **The Money-Lover** is the next Esau. His highest ambition is to make money, come what may. His motto is, "A fortune, a fortune, honestly if I can, but by any means, by all means a fortune." For a morsel of gold he would sell his peace, his honour, and his very soul. You are not to despise money: none but fools do that. Use all lawful means to gain it, and pray God to teach you to use it well. Many Bible saints were the millionaires of their day,—Abraham, Joseph, Job, David, Daniel, &c. But never do a wrong or mean thing for gain. What! would you sell your birthright for all the gold in the world? Take care, for the love of money makes millions of Esaus. We fear our city contains some who know no better things than the "goods" in their warehouses; and with whom

"Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures."

"You have golden plate and earthenware principles," said a wise man once at the table of a bad rich man,

"would it not be better to have earthenware plate and golden principles?" You need to learn thoroughly that money can do very little for you in your sorest straits. It won't help you in the great world beyond; for it is not the current coin of that realm. "How much money has he left?" a man once asked the lawyer of a deceased merchant. "The whole of it," was the ready reply; "he has not taken a shilling with him." "Are you not surprised to hear that your neighbour has left £30,000?" The dying miser, to whom the question was put, sadly replied, "Surprised? not a bit; but I should have been surprised if he had taken it with him." A friend asked one of our greatest capitalists, as he lay a-dying, for some facts, that he might write his Biography. "No, don't," said he, "my life has been a total failure." The day comes when gold is as worthless to us as it was to the rich California miners, wrecked in the "Central America" in 1847. "Some scattered the gold dust wildly about the cabin floor. Carpet bags were torn open, and the glittering metal—for the sake of which, man sins and suffers so much—was poured out as if it were water. One miner flung about him 20,000 dollars, and, like another Timon, bade who would satisfy his thirst for gold. But it was passed by as the veriest dross, which could neither purchase life, safety, nor forgiveness." Say, would you sell your birthright for that?

IV. The Drunkard is the last of our Esaus. For a mouthful of strong drink he despises at once the

blessings of earth and heaven. With him, as with Esau, the mischief is often done or begun in boyhood. A boy is a man in the making, and oh, how often strong drink mars him! Take one case: I cannot get over it. A neighbour and I once came upon two boys fighting, and separated them. Fine boys they were, in their teens; and, like Esau, foremost in field sports. One was in a great rage. It oozed out that his comrade had invited him to share some costly drink in a tavern, and by a clever trick had left him to pay for both. One of their guardians heard of it, and told the story as a rare joke. From love of wine he was very like Esau. Time wears on. A ploughboy is going to the smithy one morning. His horse sniffs, and starts. He gets down. It is a man,—his clothes draggled with rain. He shakes him: he is dead! It is the guardian of the two boys. The night before he was in a jovial company. He did eat and drink; and went his way. He tripped and fell. His face was in a pool three or four inches deep, but deep enough to drown a drunken man. All these particulars I read in the newspapers. Some years afterwards a handsome young man puts his arm in mine. He smells of wine, and he offers me wine. By and by he died suddenly; and the only reply to my question about the cause of his death was a strange look and a shake of the head. He was the pugilist who outwitted his comrade. One day I met the other in the street. Oh! what a sight!—his father's dogs might have barked at him; his father could scarcely have known him a

little way off:—his face foul; his eyes red; his hair matted; all in rags; his voice husky: he had been sleeping on stairs; all his friends had cast him off; he was perishing with hunger; would I not give him a few *coppers* to buy bread with? Yet he had been nursed tenderly in the lap of wealth. He soon dropped out of sight, and then into the grave. Lately I visited the neighbour who helped me to separate the fighting boys. I remember well how heartily he laughed *with* the wily boy; but I fear that he shall never laugh heartily again. He is now a ruined Esau. He has sold health, wealth, his earthly all for strong drink. I am like Job's messenger; for of these five "I only am escaped alone to tell thee" not to look on the wine when it is red, for in the end it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. Alas! that vice has more martyrs than virtue, and men suffer more to be ruined than to be saved! These four sold their fair earthly birthright—and each had an enviable birthright—for one morsel of meat; nay, they did not get even the one morsel. Oh the folly of it: oh the sin, the shame. To lose the birthright, and even gain no pottage! To live a slave, and die a beggar! After such a story, can you wonder that I wish you to be in this matter even as I am,—a total abstainer from strong drink?

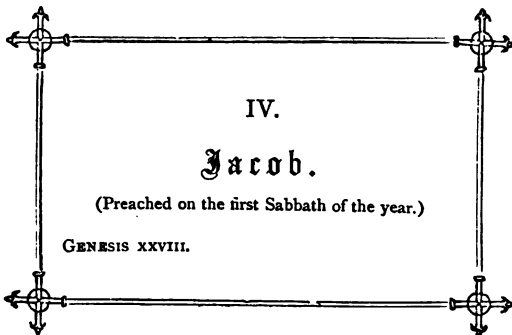
In his old age Warren Hastings used to tell the story of his life. He was a poor orphan of seven summers when he learnt that all the broad acres around him—the lands of Daylesford—had once belonged to his ancestors, and should have been his birthright. One day, as he lay

on the bank of the rivulet, he resolved that he would win back the lost inheritance. And he did it. When ruler of India, he never forgot the vow of his youth, nor did he rest till he was proprietor of Daylesford. A boy of seven, then, is not too young to brood over his lost birthright, to mourn the loss, and to yearn for its recovery. You have lost your birthright, like Hastings, by the fault of your ancestor ; and, like Esau too, by your own choice and fault. Unlike Hastings, you cannot win it back, though you were as successful in good works as he was in making an empire and a fortune. Yet you may gain it back. Esau and Jacob may both have the great birthright, and no man can snatch it from his brother. Put your case into Christ's hands, and He will secure for you a perfect right and title to the glorious inheritance on high. Thank God that for you there is yet place for repentance. But if you delay you may have to shed tears as bitter and as unavailing as Esau's. Let your soul leap for joy that your Father waits to give you the blessing.

“ Ye who have sold for nought
Your heritage above, ”
Receive it back unbought,
The gift of Jesus' love.”





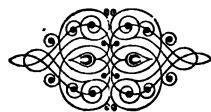


IV.

Jacob.

(Preached on the first Sabbath of the year.)

GENESIS XXVIII.





I WISH to draw some New Year's lessons from the life of Jacob. I shall not stay to recite the chief facts in his history, for they are known to all the world. May the God of Jacob and of Bethel help us to-day to make a fresh start in our life-journey !

Jacob comes before us as—

- I. The Deceiver.*
- II. The Pilgrim.*
- III. The Dreamer.*
- IV. The Covenantant.*
- V. The Prince.*

I. We first meet Jacob as the Deceiver.—
His name reveals his shame ; for Jacob means supplanter, or heel-grasper. He was a petted, spoilt child ; and his mother Rebekah was sorely to blame for it. You remember the skins she put upon his smooth hands

and neck, that he might pass for Esau, and how he imposed upon his aged, blind father, and cheated his brother out of his birthright. The story sickens us. There could hardly be a meaner sneak or hypocrite than he was. With a feeling of relief and admiration, we turn to poor Esau. "Profane person" though he was, we are sure that he never would have stooped to such base behaviour.

I wish you a happy new year to-day ; but I cannot create what I wish ; yet what I can I will : I will point out the way that leads to it. That way is the farthest off from the crooked way of lies. Be true in everything ; be open as noonday ; be frank and straightforward in all your doings ; shake off as if it were a viper, every mean and misleading thing. Perfect truthfulness will add amazingly to your enjoyment of life, while guile like Jacob's will be the grave of all your happiness. As sugar sweetens your tea, so truthfulness will sweeten all your life. Life will be a perpetual feast, when you keep it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. It is not easy always to think, speak, and act as a child of light should. Even his mother taught Jacob deceit. One day I came upon a sailor boy begging by the wayside. An empty sleeve hung down ; and his limbs were curiously twisted like willow wands in a basket ; and he was sitting upon them. As I drew near, I noticed his face changing colour and shape, and his eyes expanding. I knew him well enough ; he was in our mission school. He was no more a sailor than I was, nor had he less life



FREDERICK THE GREAT AND THE PRINCE.

in his limbs. You smile, but his story would have touched your heart. His father and mother had trained him to deceive, and compelled him to beg.

Rebekah was an Arab ; and the Arabs, from her day to ours, have been notorious liars and cheaters. Some boys and girls seem to have just a little of the Arab in their nature. They have a pleasure in cheating, or in hiding the truth, or in telling big stories that are not correct. Or they like clever tricks, and easily praise successful cheaters. Be you a fearless truth-teller, come what may. The old coins used to have engraven upon them, " 'Tis death to counterfeit." 'Tis death to your true happiness. A little boy was once playing in the library of Frederick the Great, his grand uncle. Frederick opened a book of French fables, and asked the boy to translate one. He did it in splendid style, and the king praised him warmly. The honest little fellow at once confessed, " Your majesty, I had that fable for my lesson with the tutor the other day." The king was more delighted with the prince's honesty, than with his cleverness ; laid aside his work ; took the boy out for a walk in the gardens ; feelingly advised him to be true and upright in all his dealings, as he had been in the library ; and showed him how easily he might yield to lies, and so darken his whole life. They had just reached the lofty obelisk that still stands at the Palace gate at Potsdam, when the king, pointing to it, said, " Look at this high thing : (*sa droiture fait sa force*),—its *uprightness* is its strength." You know that a tall monu-

ment would soon become a heap of ruins if it were not straight. "Remember this morning, my good Fritz," he added, "perhaps thou wilt think of it when I am gone." Fritz did think of it. When he was King Frederick William III., and father of the present Emperor of Germany, he used often thankfully to quote the advice, and recommend it to his family and friends. For king and commoner, for man and boy, for woman and girl alike, uprightness is strength and happiness. God has given you an upright body to be the fitting home of an upright soul ; but crookedness is weakness and misery, as we see in—

II. Jacob the Pilgrim.—Disasters follow fast and faster the deceit of Rebekah and Jacob. He flies for his life, and she never sees him again on earth. Yet she expected that by her cunning he would dwell at home in ease as a wealthy chief. But watch him, yon trembling, hunted thing—hurrying along the great highway to the North. He leaves all his ill-gotten gain to Esau ; and takes with him only a staff, a skin bottle of water, a bag of dried dates, and his brother's curse. Terrible is his agony : he fiercely chides himself as the greatest of fools, and the meanest of sinners. And three fears sit heavy upon his heart : the fear of God above, the fear of Esau behind, and the fear of the future. Then he was snared in his own net by the wily Laban, and, worst of all, by his own sons when they brought him Joseph's coat dyed in the blood of a kid : —it was in the skin of a kid that he cheated his father

and Esau. The supplanter was supplanted with a vengeance. Standing beside a broken bridge near a railway junction, and looking down the main line, I saw, the other evening, a forest of red lamps, of which the top-most seemed to touch the sky. These were danger-signals for the engine-drivers. Jacob's history holds aloft many danger-signals to warn us off the wicked, the woeful way of lies.

It is now time to speak of—

III. Jacob the Dreamer.—We join ourselves to him in spirit as he hurries on in the glorious brightness of the setting sun. He is near Luz, the stony backbone of Palestine. A lonely wayfarer, his first night from home, there is a tumult of feeling within him, for which we have no name. His sin has found him out;—how bitter it is! The memories of his godly home rush in upon him like a flood; his sorrow is stirred, his heart is hot. He now ponders all his father had taught him about Adam and Eve, Cain and Noah. "Like Adam and Eve, I am shut out from my earthly paradise," he might say, "from my own home; and shut out by my own fault. I am a young Cain, a fugitive and a vagabond, like him in doom as in wronging my brother. Oh, am I to be shut out of God's ark like the sinners in the days of Noah?" But the fears and the fatigues of the day have wearied him out. He eats a few dates, and takes a drink from his skin bag, and then makes his bed. For he is on a moor, far from any human dwelling.

"He took of the stones . . . and put them for his pillows" (ver. 11). Notice that it says stones and pillows; for he made, or rather built, a bed for his body, not one pillow for his head. He had a good reason for not sleeping on the grass or heather. The writer of a book called, "Through Norway with a Knapsack," tells that, when he had to sleep out, he always slept on stones. The ground draws all the heat out of the body, and soon makes the sleeper numb with cold. But stones under the sleeper grow and keep warm, and make the body pretty comfortable. Jacob knew what he was doing when he made pillows of stones for his whole body. He has often had such a bed before, and is soon sound asleep. But though his eyes are closed his heart wakes, and his heart's eyes see wonderful things. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." His dreams, like yours, are shaped by his thoughts during the day. As his home was shut against him, as Noah's ark was shut against the ungodly, as Eden was shut against Adam and Eve, so he fears that heaven is shut against him for his sins. These fears form the hollow mould into which God pours His grace and truth.

How encouraging this spendid vision must have seemed to the penitent Jacob! "Ah," he might reason, "God still speaks to me, and speaks in tones of love. Heaven is not bolted and barred against me for ever, as I feared: it is near, and it is open. A broad highway

stretches between my pillow and God's throne of grace ; and His angels are going up and down, eager to bless me the sinner." Now, what was a dream and a vision to Jacob is a fact and a reality to you. What a beautiful picture of the gospel Jesus finds at Bethel ! He said to Nathanael (John i. 51), " Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." He here likens Himself to the ladder at Bethel. It was not a narrow, trembling ladder, such as we often see. The Hebrew word for it means a staircase : it was like a broad massive stair built of solid masonry. Jesus as man touches the lowest spot on earth, and as God He touches the highest heavens ; and as our mediator, that is, one in the *middle*, He fills with all His infinite power the space between God and us, and creates " a new and living way," which can never break down, by which our prayers go up to God, and God's blessings come down to us. No wonder Jacob called that spot Bethel, or God's House. And now since Christ has died for us, any spot on earth may become to you the gate of heaven. The child in his crib, the soldier on the battlefield, the sailor pacing the lonely deck, the traveller in his tent, may hear God's loving voice, and receive angels' visits. Faith may change any place on which you light into a Bethel.

Perhaps one of my readers is like Jacob in this, that he has just left home, or has just fallen into an open sin. These two events sometimes lead to the great change. On that first night in the lonely lodging many a faithful

young heart is hushed, and hears God's voice, and in losing home finds heaven. And often the shame of a discovered sin brings a healthy-hearted boy to the foot of the cross, and changes his Luz into Bethel. Early in the morning he makes his pillow an altar, and starts as one of Sion's pilgrims. Look now at—

IV. Jacob, the Covenanter.—Our forefathers were called Covenanters, because they signed a covenant with their blood, and that act shaped their whole after-life. Jacob's vow or covenant had quite as much power over him. That was the happy day that fixed his choice on his Saviour and his God. He rose early in the morning, built an altar, worshipped God with his whole heart, and vowed a vow. Some blame Jacob's vow, but they are mistaken, I think. He vowed not in the spirit of miserable bargaining, but in the glad surrender of a loving heart. His seems to have been the vow of faith in the Covenant-God. God spoke to him, and then he spoke to God. And he spoke very modestly. Of earthly goods he asks but "bread to eat and raiment to put on." And he resolved that he would be liberal to God's cause: "And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Some noble-hearted boys, in moments when God has given them great surprises of His goodness, or in beginning life, have made such a vow as Jacob's, and by God's help have kept it. I see often in our Missionary Record a contribution from one who signs himself "Jacob's vow."

But children often make vows in a wrong spirit, and soon forget them. This is the case with your Covenanters of the sick room. A boy told me that if all his sick-bed vows were printed, they would, he thought, paper every inch of his bed-room,—walls, ceiling and floor. The new year is a good time for vowing. Very many begin it by yielding themselves afresh to God. Won't you do so? The God of Bethel will be as good to you as He was to the trembling Jacob. He will make your Bethel-like fear pass over into Bethel-like joy. He will create a quiet heart within, an open heaven above, and a prosperous way before you. He will give you Bethel visions and blessings, and people your waste with angels. You will then move along life's highway like Jacob when "he trode a swifter pace, with high raised feet, for the joy the vision gave him" (chap. xxix. 1, margin). He was like another Pilgrim whose burden fell at the foot of the cross, and who, giving three leaps for joy, pushed gladly forward. If you wish to be free, joyous, and strong, nimbly lifting up your feet along life's highway, start from Bethel, and walk all the way with the God of Jacob.

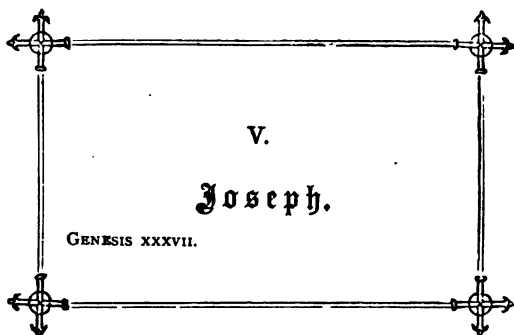
We now take farewell of—

V. Jacob as the Prince.—After twenty-one years in the East, he returned to his native land. You remember his wrestling till break of day with the angel, and prevailing. He was then revived, and became a holier man. And God gave him a new name, Israel, which means a prince with

God. After men have done great deeds, they are introduced to the Queen, and, kneeling down, they are ennobled, and receive their new title. In some such way Jacob wasennobled on his knees. The prince of a small German State is less honoured than a prince of England ; and so a prince with man is less honourable than a prince with God. Every commoner in the Church of Christ belongs to the peerage of heaven. His honour is higher than that of the most famous of earth's princes. "Who is the greatest man you ever knew?" was asked of Wilberforce. "Pitt," he replied, "beyond all comparison, William Pitt ; but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

By nature you are like the crooked Jacob. The Bible says, "the heart,"—your heart—"is deceitful," that is, a Jacob : it is the same word in the Bible. But God is ready to give you, as He gave Jacob, a new heart and name, and raise you to royal honours. Begin this new year with that new name, if you have it not already ; and live like one who believes that the secret of all happiness and the greatest of all honours is, to be a true Christian.





V.

Joseph.

GENESIS XXXVII.





I WILL tell you what I did before I wrote this address. I read all the chapters about Joseph. I tried to put away all the notions I had gathered about him, and to feel as if I were reading his history for the first time. I tried to get into that mood in which we read a new book, fresh from the printer. I thus gave myself up to the current of the story. When I had done, my mind was full of the most pleasing thoughts: the simple reading of the story had done my heart good. For Joseph's is one of the most interesting histories in the world. It has yielded pleasure to millions of every age and class. The very sight or sound of his name gives joy. And he has the strange power of uniting our hearts to him, as to a well-beloved friend. He had "the genius to be loved" greatly because he had the genius to love greatly; and his genius still lives in these Bible pages.

We discover in Joseph—

- I. A Hated Brother.*
- II. A Blameless Youth.*
- III. A Famous Ruler.*
- IV. A Type of Christ.*

I. A Hated Brother.—The boy was his father's pet. Very likely he was the perfect picture of Rachel, who was gone; and so Jacob saw and loved in him his sainted wife. In token of love his father foolishly gave him a coat of many colours, to which, alas, the colour of blood was soon added! I am not sure that Joseph was proud of his bright coat and flattering dreams, for he was so artless in telling all to his father and brethren. Yet his brothers' hatred grew till they put him into the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites.

It was for no good reason that they hated him. Their hatred sprang from envy, and dislike of the shining example that rebuked them. "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." Not that he was a sneaking tell-tale, but he would not do as they did; nor would he hide from his father their evil doings.

Behold how ugly and devilish selfishness is, when it puts enmity between brothers and sisters. What fearful lengths it carries people! It made Jacob's sons in the sight of God the murderers of Joseph. What liars it made them! And how cruel! We agree with the little children who are full of rage at Joseph's naughty brothers,

and often furiously beat their pictures in the big Bible. Think of Joseph left in the pit to die, and his brothers coolly sitting down at the pit's mouth to eat bread, as if nothing out of the way had happened. They were like the wolves in the forest, that devour their fallen companion and continue the chase.

God means the children of a family to feel bound together by bands that grapple the heart, and to stand true to one another to life's end. Reverence the mighty ties of kindred which God's hands have fashioned. Think how awful it is to burst them asunder and cast them away from you. The chief curse of homes nowadays, is the curse of Jacob's home : a heartless selfishness which separates brothers and sisters, and moves the strong to injure the weak. In his "Lessons from Life," Mr. Arnot tells again and again how wretched his boyhood was made by the teasings and tormentings of bigger children. Like the little tyrants of our firesides, they vexed and frightened him for their amusement. A girl on the other side of the river holds up his pet pigeon, as if it were dead ; and his heart is torn with fear. One day a soldier gives him a shilling. The boys in fun gather round him and say, "Now, you're listed." They explain at great length how some day soldiers would come, take him from home, and make him fight on the battle-field. The idea sank into his heart of hearts, and filled him with terror by day and night. He counted himself doomed to die in battle. Perhaps his misery and fear were little less than Joseph's in the pit or prison.

Big boy-nature is often cruel to smaller children, not from want of heart, but from want of thought. Watch and pray against this cruelty, for it may grow into a deadly cancer.

Joseph also teaches you never to make any one your foe without a very good reason. Did he not on the throne make his brothers tremble in their turn? We secretly rejoice at their terrors, so richly deserved. The weakest whom you wrong may one day be your master. Right is on his side, and right is might in the end, and makes him even now stronger against you than a thousand armed men. The wheel takes a sudden turn, and puts the oppressed in the place which the oppressor counted his own for ever. The slave rises from the pit to the throne, and holds in his hands the life and happiness of his enslavers. A mouse once, as the fable runs, waked the sleeping lion. Down came the great paw upon the trembling intruder. But the lion generously forgave, and set the captive free. Another day the mouse finds the lion roaring and plunging in the net. The grateful little creature rushes to the rescue, nibbles the cords, and saves the lion's life. The surest way to injure yourself is to injure the weak; and none is so strong but that he may sorely need some day the love and help of the weakest.

II. Joseph was also a Blameless Youth.— Though terribly tempted, he never yielded. He ran the risk of being spoiled by the extremes of adversity and

prosperity. The favourite son of a wealthy chief, he was cast like a dog into a vile pit. And he was sold like a worthless thing for twenty pieces of silver; and that by his own brothers. Bound and foot sore, his eyes red with tears, a burning sun overhead and burning sand under foot, he is torn from home, the slave of these rascal Ishmaelites. And in Egypt he was falsely accused and cast into a dungeon for two years. Was ever youth more shamefully wronged? Yet he was not hardened or soured. His soul was kept sweet and strong. He could bide his time, which was God's time. His soul was like the oak which is nursed into strength by storms. Both the mercy and the trial in the web of his life added to its strength: winter and summer ripened in him the fruits of the Spirit. Souls, like ships, are wrecked in two ways. A ship sometimes sinks under a fierce storm. Thus last Sabbath, near the isle of Wight, the "*Eurydice*" sank in three minutes with some four hundred sailors. But over one hundred years ago, near the same spot, the *Royal George*, lying at anchor, lost her balance, and went down in three minutes with eight hundred brave men.

"It was not in the battle;
No tempest gave the shock,
She sprang no fatal leak,
She ran upon no rock."

But neither palace nor prison could shipwreck Joseph. A young man could hardly have been more tempted than he was in Potiphar's palace, but he came through it unscathed. The secret of his safety lies in his question,

“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” In his heart, not on it, he wore a talisman that destroyed sin’s charms. Amid Egypt’s enticements Joseph’s soul might tremble like the needle of the compass; but, though trembling, it was true to the pole-star of duty. His religion overcame all obstacles because there was real life in it. The other day I slackened my step opposite one of your gardens to notice the crocuses raising their slender heads amid the heavy gravel on the walk. The tender plants, having real life, forced their way through the hard earth and conquered the very stones. So the heavenly plant of Joseph’s piety displayed all its beauty and gave out its sweet odours in the wicked palaces of Potiphar and Pharaoh.

The case of Joseph proves that, by God’s grace, your hearts may be pure and your lives unspotted by the world even in the worst times and places. May you not hope in this Christian land to have as noble a life as Joseph had in Egypt?

Let us now follow the career of—

III. Joseph as a Famous Ruler.—He entered Egypt as a Hebrew slave, and became its prime minister. On the throne he was next to Pharaoh: off the throne he was greater than Pharaoh. He was the hero of his age, the saviour of his country, the most successful man of his day. The secret thought of some boys is, that if they become earnest Christians, they will not get on in the world, or take a good place as men among men. If

ever a youth might be excused for thinking so, Joseph was that youth. He might naturally have said to himself, "I will never get on if I begin as a worshipper of Jehovah. My religion was good enough in Canaan, but it will never do here, where an Hebrew is an abomination. I must yield. Shall I think that I am right and all the world wrong? I must do in Egypt as the Egyptians do." He reasoned more boldly. He determined to confess the truth, come what might? He then gained success, not by seeking it, but by doing his duty with all his might. He sought first the kingdom, and then all these things were added unto him. He became so great by being so good: he was such a noble man because he was such a thorough man of God. Do you really think that godliness might take from you the manly mind? Have you forgotten Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Daniel? Have you forgotten Paul in the shipwreck? Though a mere landsman, he became the real captain of the ship and all through his firm faith in God. A healthy Christianity will form in boys a similar manliness.

It pleases and inspires the soul to find that so many successes and failures did not in the least poison Joseph. Doctors say that of those in our asylums a very large number have been petted children. But Joseph was not spoiled by his father's over-indulgence. When he rose to the top of the tree, first in Potiphar's, and then in Pharaoh's service, his head did not grow giddy with the height. And how charming his loyalty to his father and brothers in Egypt! Not an atom had he of that con-

temptible littleness which makes some prosperous youths ashamed of their poor relatives. Nor was he like some who, when they reach worldly greatness, adopt the religious customs of the great around them. His was the noble and faithful heart that loved to dwell among his own people. He wished his very bones to declare his devotion to his God and his family; for on his death-bed he took an oath of his friends that they would carry up his bones to the promised land. But nothing about him is more beautiful than his forgiving spirit. Revenge was then regarded as a part of religion, and a sacred duty, and indeed the main business of life. The height of felicity to an Egyptian is represented on their monuments, where the victor's foot is planted on the necks of his captives. There are still people in the world who love vengeance more than life. And it is one of the hardest things in the world for a Christian with his whole heart to forgive his wronger when he is wholly in his power. Joseph, however, loved his brothers with an implacable love, as they had hated him with an implacable hatred. His love was like a live coal which glows more for the fierce blowing of the wind upon it. Thus the ruler in Egypt disdained to avenge the injuries of the Hebrew stripling. Yet he took divine revenge on them; for he heartily forgave them. "Revenge is sweet," as all the world believes. It is sweeter than honey, when it is like the revenge of Joseph. He had the spirit of the early Christians. They were robbed and murdered; but on the thousands of their tombstones

that have been brought to light, there is not one word breathing revenge. Joseph should help you to perceive the grandeur of Christian forgiveness. In Dr. Duff's *Life* I have just come upon these words about one of his first converts. "For days and weeks the young Hindoo could not help crying out, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you!' How beautiful! how divine! surely this is the truth."

In Genesis xxxix. 2, Moses gives us the secret of Joseph's great success and meekness under it,—“And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.”

We may also find in Joseph—

IV. A Type of Christ.—As one who knows that the sun is the source of light, sees the sun in all his rays behind, before, above, around: so one who knows that the Saviour is the heart of the Bible, finds many a hint or type of Him in the Old Testament. The letters in this book are printed from types. The printer's types are the forms of letters in metal. As the printed letters and the printer's types resemble each other, so Joseph is a type of the Word who became flesh. Let us place Joseph and Jesus side by side. Joseph, like Jesus, was his father's well-beloved son; the best of brothers, yet hated and rejected by his own; was sold from envy for a few pieces of silver; endured a great temptation, yet without sin; was brought into a low estate, and falsely condemned; of the two with him in the same

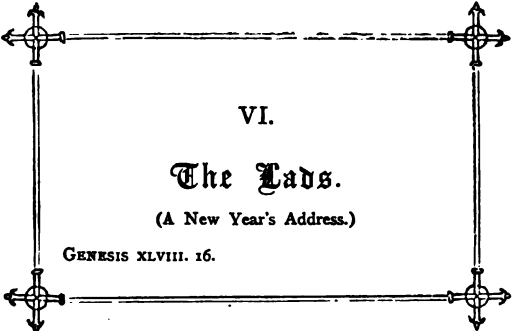
condemnation, the one was taken and the other left ; was the revealer of secrets and of sin, and the interpreter of dark things which baffled all others ; was raised to honour and power, and became then the prince and saviour of his brethren, whose sin was thus turned to their salvation ; was the greatest of forgivers, the forgiver of his own murderers ; and was in all things the son and hope of Israel. Read now the touching words in Genesis l. 15-21. Joseph's brethren made their own narrow hearts the measure of his. Their fears burst out afresh after Jacob's death, for they could not forgive themselves, and Joseph's generosity seemed beyond belief. How often we carry ourselves towards our heavenly Joseph as they did ! We doubt His love, and do Him grievous wrong by our dark suspicions. Yet He bears with us, and comforts us, and speaks kindly unto us. Again, while famine rages over all the face of the earth, our Joseph offers the bread of life to a perishing world. All countries may come and buy, that they may live and not die, if only they agree to His terms, which are,—“without money and without price.” Joseph's brethren, when they knew him not, were for buying and bargaining with him. They took him for a merchant who had an eye to a good bargain, and who studied paltry economy. But when they knew him, they received all of his free bounty. And so, when the apostles knew the Lord, they exclaimed, “Out of His fulness have all we received ; and grace for grace.” John Newton likens himself to one of Joseph's brothers trembling at the foot of his throne in

Egypt. He found himself a conscience-smitten sinner at the feet of Jesus, expecting to hear only the awful sentence of the Judge—

“ But oh ! what surprise when He spoke,
While tenderness beamed in His face ;
My heart then to pieces He broke,
O'erwhelmed and confounded by grace—
' Poor sinner, I know thee full well ;
By thee I was sold and was slain :
But I died to redeem thee from hell,
And raise thee in glory to reign.
I am *Jesus* whom thou hast blasphemed,
And crucified often afresh ;
But let me henceforth be esteemed
Thy brother, thy bone, and thy flesh.
My pardon I freely bestow,
Thy wants I will fully supply,
I'll guide thee and guard thee below,
And soon will remove thee on high.
Go publish to sinners around—
That they may be willing to come—
The mercy which now thou hast found,
And tell them that yet there is room.'
Oh sinners ! the message obey
No more vain excuses pretend,
But come, without further delay,
To Jesus, our brother and friend.







VI.

The Lads.

(A New Year's Address.)

GENESIS XLVIII. 16.





IN the Thuringian Forest, "the heart of Germany," there is a romantic valley, whose gigantic pines give it its name of Schwarzathal, or Black Valley. The stream and rocky heights seem to cut off the road a little way ahead, but as you advance an easy path opens out. At the mouth of the valley the tourist is sure to notice big straggling letters chiselled out of the rock :—he spells, *Salus Intransitibus*, that is, Salvation to the Entrants. To-day you are like that tourist : for you stand in the portals of another year ; and through life's vale, dark with uncertainties, your untravelled way stretches before you. And like him, you are hailed from above with glad tidings ; for I tell you of salvation for all the young entrants upon the young year.

The blessing carved on the rock is very like the blessing Jacob breathed over his two grandsons. What a scene for poet or painter ! In the strength of his manhood Joseph had preserved all the tender love of his childhood, and so he hastened to his dying father, taking

with him Manasseh and Ephraim, who were then between seventeen and twenty years of age. The visit heartens and revives the old man: "and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed." And then "by faith Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Heb. xi. 21). "And he blessed Joseph and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." So, on this first Sabbath of the new year, the whole Church bends over you, the makers and trustees of the future, and prays God to bless you. We wish you salvation.

The heads of my address are—

I. The Great Benefactor.

II. His Blessings.

III. His Crossed Hands.

I. The Great Benefactor.—Real blessing, Jacob knows, can come to the boys only through that great Being, the Angel. Now, just see how much we learn about him from Jacob's words. Listen.

1. *He is equal with God.* He is the God of Abraham and Isaac (ver. 15). Jacob likes to think of God as the God of his family. That fact brings God nearer, and helps him to grasp Him. It relieves us to think of God as the God of people very like ourselves. Thus when Saunderson, a great discoverer, blind from his birth, was

dying, he cried, "God of Newton and of Clarke, have mercy on me." By placing together the fifteenth and sixteenth verses you see that Jacob's Angel is the same, and yet not the same as God; He is one with Him, and yet Another; He is of the same nature, but not the same Person.

2. And *He is the good Shepherd*:—"the God which fed me," that is, shepherded me: it is the same word as in the 23rd Psalm. A lost sheep was Jacob, ready to perish when the heavenly Shepherd found him. Who is it that says, "I am the good Shepherd?" You now know the name of Jacob's Angel.

3. He is also the *Redeemer*:—"who redeemed me from all evil," Jacob says. It was an old notion that every one has a guardian angel, but Jacob is not thinking of such an angel. For he says, "the Angel," not an angel or my angel, but the One whose name is above every name. His name here also means a kinsman, a blood-relative, who takes vengeance on our foes as Abraham took vengeance on the kings who carried away his nephew Lot. Who can this great kinsman Redeemer be but the man Christ Jesus, who gave His life a ransom for us and who sets the prisoners free? None but He can redeem us from all evil. Evil is like the deadly Upas tree: it has thousands of parts, but only one root; and sin is that one root. The Angel, by saving Jacob from sin, had delivered him from all evil, root and branch. And Jacob knows that his great Benefactor is able and willing to bless the lads also,

We may say of the Bible what the beloved disciple says of heaven, "The Lamb is the light thereof." Or it is like a picture where the canvas and the frame are only meant to set off the face in the centre. Christ stretched the shadow, or rather the brightness, of His coming right across the whole Old Testament to the feet of Adam and Eve in Paradise; and so we come upon traces of Him everywhere. He often visited His servants in the form of that flesh which He was one day to wear, just as princes in disguise have visited beforehand the kingdoms over which they were to reign. He was then rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and His delights were with the sons of men. Read in this way, the Old Testament becomes a New Testament. How thankful you should be that you know far more about Jacob's Redeemer than Jacob himself did.

"Each little voice in turn,
Some glorious truth proclaims,
What sages would have died to learn,
Now taught by cottage dames."

But remember that you have not a better Redeemer than the lads had, though you have a Redeemer better revealed.

I will now call in the two oldest nations in the world to teach you how to begin the year well. The Jews began their new year with the Passover, which was their feast of Redemption. It was held in April when all nature was bursting into life and beauty. Thus the new year reminded them of the Angel, the Redeemer, and

also of their new birth and new life. A Chinaman won't go to bed on a new year's eve till he has paid all the debts of the past year. As the year draws to a close he calls in all his debts, and casts about for ways and means of meeting them. Rather than begin his new year with his old debts he will starve himself for weeks, sell his furniture, take on new loans at higher interest, and even turn thief and highwayman. This is the reason why in China there are more crimes in December than in any other month. It is a part of a Chinaman's religion to clear off all old scores ere the old year expires. That is what he calls "rounding the year."

Let the Jews teach you to begin the new year with the Angel who redeems from all evil. Let the Chinese teach you that a happy new year belongs only to those whose soul-debts have been forgiven, and whose past has been "rounded." Do not carry these old debts into the new year, but carry them all to the Saviour. Then the genial currents of your soul shall not be frozen like the rivers around ; but in your praise and holy living there shall flow forth warm gratitude for—

II. Our Benefactor's Blessings.—A young soul in sin is a young slave in the devil's chains. Our Benefactor smites our tyrant, and breaks our chains. The young soul in sin is like the strayed lamb in the wilderness. It needs water, pasture, shelter,—everything. But let the shepherd find it, and it has every blessing. No man living knew better than Jacob how

easily the evil in the world might undo the lads ; but he also knew that if his Angel were their Angel, all would be well with them. So he makes the best use of his latest breath in recommending his Redeemer and Shepherd to them, and them to his Redeemer.

But our Benefactor's blessings are also for the body, and for this world. Jacob's prayer is not, bless their souls, but just bless the lads,—bless them all round in everything ; in soul and body ; in boyhood, manhood, and old age ; for time and eternity. And they were blest with earthly prosperity. It is not wrong in us to wish that, if it please God, you may be favoured with earthly goods. Expect success in life, and do what you can to gain it. More than that: God promises you success in all ordinary cases, if you take His way in life. Hundreds of times have I seen the truth of such a text, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." "We have lost a great deal by religion," said a wife one day. "Yes," her husband replied, "you lost a bad temper, and I lost a tattered coat, and the habit of drinking." I witnessed for years the career of a godless man who farmed his own property. Farmer, farm-house, and farm all went down the hill to ruin at the same pace. When you saw any one of the three you could tell what stage on ruin's road the other two had reached. In that farm and farmer you have a small specimen of creation and creation's Lord. When man was holy, this earth was all one paradise, When man fell, the earth was

cursed with him, and for man's sin the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ; but when all men shall know the Lord, there shall be a new earth rejoicing in every one of God's bounties. The reason why thousands are starving just now is as plain as day : these bad times have been made by the bad lives of men. Our calamities are not God's doing, but man's. Let this truth sink into your very soul, that the most of the sorrows of this winter have come from our sins. One Bank gives us seven millions of reasons for thinking so. It makes one giddy to think how many tons of gold have been lost, all of which would have been saved, had all our merchants been guided by the good Angel, who redeems from all evil. Surely after what has happened in our city, you boys who mean to be merchants will believe that honesty is the best policy, or rather that honesty is better than all policy. Man is the author of man's miseries. As I came along to-day I noticed that God had filled with His sunshine the whole space between heaven and this frozen earth ; and I had secret joy in thinking that he was willing to pour an equal abundance of His grace upon our frozen hearts. Yes, our God is so concerned to bless us, that if only one seed out of every million grows, there shall be food enough for man and beast. Start in life as the patriarch wished the two lads to start, and God's blessings will come to you in a united flood. The Angel will redeem you from all evil, and guide you into all good,

Watch now—

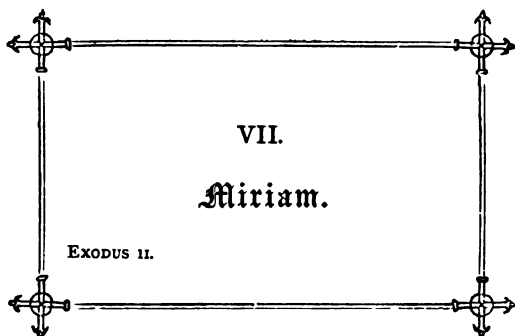
III. The Crossed Hands.—Joseph placed the lads so that the outstretched right hand of the blind Jacob would touch Manasseh, the elder; for with the Jews as with us, the right hand was more prized than the left. But Jacob crossed hands, laying his right upon Ephraim, the younger, and his left upon Manasseh. Joseph thought it was a mistake, and wished to alter it; but Jacob objected as he knew that God designed the greater blessing for the younger. All God's children are blest, but not in the same way. He often crosses hands in a way we don't like, and cannot understand, and would fain alter. He often gives most to the least likely, making the first last, and the last first, and sadly crossing our wishes. Your comrade has more money, better health, and greater cleverness than you. He gains without trouble what you struggle for in vain. Ah! we have often far sorer puzzles than Joseph had. In my mission district I once visited a company of thieves at breakfast. The table seemed to groan under all sorts of food, and the room rang with their mirth. "We live like devils, and we feast like lords," one of them shouted to me in a tone of triumph. Under the same roof, in the garret, I found a decent needle-woman. She besought a line to the Infirmary. She wanted a quiet corner to die in. The doctor declared that she was starving: for medicine he gave her only meat; and soon she came to me, hale and strong, and overflowing with gratitude to God and man. I once travelled over Highland hills with an old man. He pointed out that all the land in

sight belonged to one deer-forest. Several God-fearing families, in deepest poverty, had been turned out of their homes by the proprietor who, he said, cared not for God or man, but only for deer, and yet had more than heart could wish. It was very wrong, he knew, but with such facts before his eyes every day, it was hard to keep his faith in God. He wondered why the proprietor was not put in the shoes of the exiled peasant, and the peasant in the shoes of the proprietor. The crossed hands pained and perplexed him. He had all the feelings of David in the 37th and 73rd Psalms. Jacob's explanation of the crossed hands satisfied Joseph, and God's explanation in heaven will satisfy all His children.

I wonder what the lads thought about the hand-crossing. I should think that Ephraim was not proud, nor Manasseh envious. For, as the proverb says, "like father, like family." Their noble-minded father was not proud on Pharaoh's throne, nor soured in the dungeon; and probably his boys shared his spirit. Pride and envy are the chief poisoners of life's feast. Remember that success is God's gift; and your heart will be humble if it is given, and cheerful if it is withheld. Oh, how many lives are made little and wretched by envy and discontent. I once turned away with pity from a young caged eagle. It scorned its food. Its eye kindled with rage into an intensity almost human. It dashed wildly against the wires till roughened beak and feathers were reddened with gore. It fell back exhausted; and gathering breath, dashed again and again at the bars. And such is the

fate of the fiery young soul madly striving for a position above his reach. He but dashes against the bounds of his being, which have been fixed by God. Envy not him or her on whose favoured head the right hand of benediction rests; but be thankful for the lesser blessing the left hand conveys to you, and stand in your lot, and do your very best, and you shall not miss true happiness. The blame shall be Manasseh's if his life be poorer than Ephraim's. An aged minister died lately who used to preach to children. Not long ago he told this story in public. A gentleman with a sunburnt face came and asked him whether he remembered preaching to children in a Fifeshire village forty-two years ago. "No, I don't," he replied. "But I remember it well," continued the stranger. "I was then a lad of sixteen, about to start for India. In closing you said, 'I tell you, children: you can never be safe, and you can never be happy till you put your trust in the Saviour.' These words kept ringing in my ears in India. By God's grace I put my trust in the Saviour; and during these forty-two years I have proved that your words were true." All the Christians in the world give you the same testimony; and on this holy day they would fain lay a warm hand upon the head of every boy and girl under heaven, and give them such a benediction as Jacob breathed over his grandsons,—

THE ANGEL,
WHICH REDEEMED ME FROM ALL EVIL,
BLESS THE LADS,
AMEN.



VII.

Miriam.

EXODUS II.





WHO do you think was the first girl in the world's history? If you fancy that the answer is easy, just try it before you read on. The oldest books in the world are the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible. In one of these books, we may find the girl we are seeking. But even this hint does not bring the answer to our lips. It is not Eve, for the mother of us all was herself motherless, and the only woman who had never been a girl. Eve's eldest daughter was the first girl in the world, but she has no place in the world's history. We do not know even her name. No girl is mentioned in Genesis; and in Exodus there is, I think, only one,—Miriam. Millions of girls lived before her, but we know nothing of their girlhood. Most people have a liking for the ancient, and our subject is from the furthest back antiquity. Do you not wish to know all you can about the one girl who is introduced to us during the first two thousand five hundred years of the world's history?

Miriam is called a *maid* at the time of Moses' birth.

A maid, like our Scotch *lassie*, means a young girl. The learned say that she was then between her sixth and twelfth year. She warmly loved her mother; she was right proud of her baby-brother; and she was fond of singing. These touches of nature in her brief and broken history prove that our girls have a sisterhood of youthful feeling with her. You should be her sisters by grace, as well as by nature, "for if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed," as she was.

I will put her history into a nutshell for you. She trusted in God; she loved her family; she was steady, though she had one sad fall. These are the four chapters in our little history.—

I. How she trusted in God.

II. How she loved her family.

III. How she remained steadfast.

IV. How she fell at Hazeroth.

I. How she trusted in God.—In Hebrews xi. we read that by faith Moses was hid of his parents. It was chiefly the doing of his mother and Miriam. Amram probably had little hand in it, as he had to work night and day, making bricks without straw under the lash of ruffian slave-drivers. Now Miriam could not have so shared her mother's confidence, if she had not also shared her mother's faith. How else could her mother have trusted her, or how could she have done her part without a break-down? The unfeigned faith of Amram and

Jochebed dwelt in Miriam also. And her faith was great, for it outlived great trials. As she was a very quick-witted girl she must have had many a deep thought. The hands of Providence were strangely crossed. Pharaoh was as a god on earth, while God's people were in "anguish of spirit," and "cruel bondage." Who can tell the agony of her heart on that terrible night when the darling babe was put into the ark of bulrushes? A good man in such a case as Miriam's once said, "Surely God is dead." But her faith did not fail. Oh girl, great is thy faith, for thou trustest in Jehovah, though He seemeth to be slaying thee and thine. The great matter for you is to have true faith in God. But true faith is found only in those who know God's love; and God's love is known only through Jesus Christ. Think upon Christ, that so you may know God and put your trust in Him. Miriam, the child of many sorrows, trusted in Jehovah in her tender years. How she condemns many girls who are content to live without God. How sad that the Saviour is never sought by thousands till they are sick, or dying, or broken down in some way.

II. How she loved her family.—You know all about the saving of Moses: how the babe gave some token of his greatness and was hid three months, Jochebed and Miriam trembling at every footfall lest the spies should be upon them; how at last they made an ark or basket-cradle, daubed with slime and pitch without to make it water-tight, and made cosy within, you

may be sure ; how with many a prayer they appealed to God against the inhumanity of man, and laid the child among the reeds of the river, judging that at the worst the crocodiles would not be more cruel than the king ; how Miriam, put up to it by her mother, watched the ark ; how Pharaoh's daughter, coming to bathe, found the child ; how the woman in her was stronger than the princess, and she made the child her own ; how, at Miriam's clever suggestion, Moses was given to his mother to be nursed. All these things you know perfectly. But I want you to take notice, that the first thing the Bible tells us about the first girl in its pages is this,—that she had real daughterly and sisterly feeling ; that she was true to her family, helping her mother all she could, entering into her plan and making it a success, risking her own life to save her brother's. The Bible, which often gives only a sentence to the history of a kingdom or an age, has snatched this beautiful part of Miriam's character from forgetfulness, and holds it aloft for your admiration and imitation. It is not the cleverness nor the success, but the spirit of her act which you should think upon. What a help and comfort she must have been to her sorely tried mother ! Her presence in that mud hut must have been like the reviving breath of spring in Arctic regions. Faith in God made her thoughtful and feeling-hearted, and great sorrows drew out her sweetest, strongest sympathy with her poor parents. Her healthy heart was like those plants that give out their best odours when bruised.

“ The good are better made by ill,
As odours crushed are sweeter still.”

She loved her folk more than she feared Pharaoh. In that level land Pharaoh's pyramids and palaces were the only mountains; how very small she must have felt when she stood near them! And how awful and mighty Pharaoh must have seemed to her! Yet she was not afraid of the king's commandment. Not that she was bolder by nature than other girls, but love changed the trembling lamb into a lion in the hour of need. Hers was the true love which makes the weak strong, the timid brave, and the simple wise; which betters what is best in boy and girl, and works wonders for others' good. It made Miriam the saviour of Moses. It gave her great presence of mind, that is, the rare power of doing at once in a moment of danger the very thing that needs to be done. As a pointsman by a single timely jerk puts a whole train on the right line, so she by a single hint turned the sympathy of the princess into the right channel, and moulded it into action before it cooled down. Had she failed or blundered, the princess might have hesitated till her fears prevailed; and with a sigh or a tear she might have left the nursling to its fate; or an Egyptian nurse might have been called in, and Moses might have turned out an Egyptian. No girl ever did greater service to her family and her kind. And she did it not by aiming at some great thing, but by forgetting self and doing her work at home in the right spirit. It

was the heart that helped head and hand on that never-to-be-forgotten day.

You will not expect Miriam's success or fame, but you may have the favour of God and the love of all around you. You may be most useful though "only a girl." Miriam was a slave girl. Were our girls as ambitious to be good and do good as many are to have good looks and fine dresses, this world would soon become a very different place. Certainly you should dress neatly; for God has clothed the very earth with taste and beauty. But do not walk in a vain show and vex yourself to dress more grandly than your neighbours. These vanities of dress make many a girl as great a bondslave as Miriam's father was, and consume many a young life as the locusts consumed Egypt. Such efforts after display remind us of the peacock—the silly bird—strutting about the farm-yard, and showing off its finery before pigs and poultry. Cultivate the heavenly beauty of Miriam's conduct. What is true and good is beautiful with an everlasting beauty: disease cannot mar, death cannot destroy it. Be all beautiful within, like the king's daughter; and then you need not envy any daughter of beauty and fashion in the land.

In girls nothing is uglier than the lack of love at home. It is bad enough in a boy, but it makes a girl simply hideous. For girls have been formed by God to soften and sweeten life, and we are shocked when they poison the fountains at home. On the other hand, love like Miriam's will do more to make a girl lovely than all

the fine clothes and jewels of queens. The aged disciple John, we are told, when too old to walk or speak much, was carried into the church, and used to lift up his hands, and say, "Little children, love one another." When near heaven, he felt that here as yonder love is everything.

III. How Miriam remained steadfast.—We left Miriam with Pharaoh's daughter; and we meet her again, about eighty years afterwards, on the shore of the Red Sea (Exodus xv. 20). She was then a prophetess, that is, one given to the service of God, and Leader of the daughters of Israel; which proves that she had been steadfast during these eighty years. She took the lead in the hymn of deliverance till another Miriam, the virgin Mary (for Miriam is the Hebrew for Mary) took the lead for all the ages. They shall unite their songs in heaven where they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, that is, of Miriam and Mary; for the two songs are one. Miriam had a fine voice, and she made a good use of it. Imitate her in this also. It is your duty to praise well as much as it is mine to preach well. Long ago philosophers taught that music moulded and attuned young souls to goodness. Sacred music should have such power. A girl once asked her teacher how she might become as good at music as her rival. "Cultivate your heart," was the teacher's excellent reply. Have you noticed that God has placed your voice midway between head and heart, and thereby intimated that light from

the head and love from the heart should meet like two streams, and mingle in heavenly music? The very make of your bodies teaches you, as the Bible does, "to sing with the understanding and with the heart also," and so to "make a loud noise skilfully." A hearty love of sacred song adds much to your own and others' joys. The sick and dying are often soothed with singing when they could not bear speaking or reading. Your music may gain the blessing of those ready to perish. In our missions the music of ladies and girls has been used by God to allure the ignorant and thoughtless towards Jesus Christ. But I must not wander too far from my chief subject.

Miriam was more than one hundred and twenty years old when she died, yet, with only one exception, so far as we know, she stood firm in God's service. All her days were bound each to each by piety, though one link was sadly missing in the golden chain. Her history holds out to you both a bright example and a terrible beacon.

For consider—

IV. How she fell at Hazeroth.—Oh Miriam, how art thou fallen from heaven, thou beautiful star of the morning! The time came when Miriam must give place to Zipporah, Moses' wife, "an Ethiopian woman" (Numbers xii.). Miriam would naturally feel that her share in the saving of Moses gave her special claims upon him. Her envy was stirred, and she spake against

Moses. Two things made her sin worse. She pretended that zeal for religion was her motive, and so gained Aaron over to her side (ver. 2). And then Moses was the meekest of men ; and her anger should have melted at his meekness. Hence the anger of the Lord was kindled against her, and she became a leper white as snow. In answer to Moses' prayer she was healed ; but she was shut out of the camp for seven days, and out of Bible history till the day of her death.

You may wonder that I have praised for steadfastness one who had such a sad fall. But a character is fixed not by an act or two, but by the habits of years. I remember standing for the first time on the bridge of a far-famed river. Just under me there was a backward eddy, and a stiff breeze was also rippling the surface backwards. I was quite deceived : I fancied that the stream flowed in the direction of the eddy and the ripples. When I walked along the bank I smiled at my mistake. I should do Miriam a great wrong did I judge her by that act ; for it was the one backward eddy, the one backward rippling in the on-rushing current of a good life. Yet how sad it was ; for here we are examining it four thousand years afterwards ! Her case reminds me of the great clock in Strassburg Cathedral. It used to be counted the eighth wonder of the world. A great crowd gathers in front of it daily at noon. The twelve apostles then come out, turn round, and bow to the statue of Christ, which crowns the clock. Christ lifts up His hands and blesses them. When Peter appears, a big

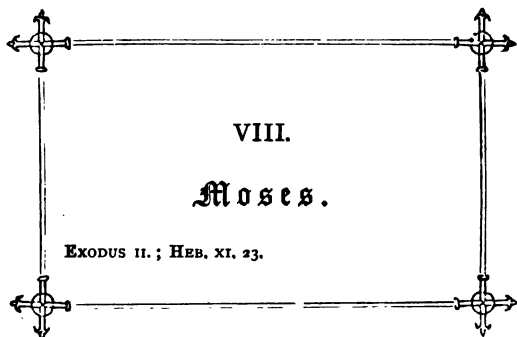
cock, perched on the left, flaps his wings in an amusingly life-like way, and crows thrice. What a deep, strange laugh arises from the crowd ! It is a mixture of pity and scorn, but less of pity than of grinning scorn : you see that they are despising Peter for his faithlessness. Alas ! not all the sin is buried with the sinner's bones.

Now, what exactly was Miriam's sin ? Was it not selfishness bursting out into envy and jealousy ? Her selfishness took a very common form ; for it filled her with ill-will against a new-comer into the family by marriage—that Ethiopian woman ! How natural ! yet how ugly ! If one could see the soul of an envious girl, as the blessed angels see it, it would shock us as much as Miriam's leprosy shocked all beholders. This selfish envy is the first and worst sin of children. How often you smile at its signs in your little brothers and sisters ! Augustine says that he has seen a baby a few weeks old pale with envy against its milk-fellow, its twin-brother at the same breast. And selfishness is the last sin to leave us ; for unselfishness is the ripe fruit, the finishing touch of a Christian character. Grace, sisterhood, old age, and a noble life,—all these united failed to conquer Miriam's wrong self-love. Self has two rivals : one in heaven, and one on earth—God and man. Selfishness shuts out God and man from the heart, and usurps all the space belonging to them, and so breaks all the commandments at one bound. Hence the whole law is both broken and fulfilled by love. There is but one sure way of getting rid of all the mean grumblings and grudgings of selfishness. I

wrote those lines by a babbling brook on the sea-shore : soon the tide came in and filled the channel of the stream to the brim, and all the angry brawlings were hushed. Let the love of God in Christ fill and flood your soul ; and then it will absorb and change your self-love, as the ocean absorbed and changed the brook ; and all your selfish grumblings will disappear in the peace of God that passeth all understanding.







VIII.

Moses.

EXODUS II. ; HEB. XI. 23.





AS Moses is a Hebrew child I shall treat him in the Hebrew manner. A Jew would probably call a very poor boy "a child of poverty;" a boy who had outlived many dangers, "a child of providence;" and a very pious boy, "a child of grace." Thus the boy Moses was—

- I. The Child of Poverty.*
- II. The Child of Providence.*
- III. The Child of Grace.*

Let us at once bend over—

I. The Child of Poverty.—You and I will draw near and look upon this strange nest and nestling. He was a foundling, that is, a child left by its parents and found by some passer-by. His name means *water-saved*. I knew a foundling who was called Horace Nelson, because he was found, one winter morning, on Glasgow Green near Nelson's Monument. He was

named from the monument, which was not harder than his mother's heart ; and so Moses was named from the water out of which he was drawn. Each seemed to be nobody's child ; and so the one was named as the child of the water, and the other as the child of the monument. That slave's child in the ark seems the poorest of the poor. Left as a prey to flood and famine, to crocodiles and vultures, was ever poor child in sadder plight ? Yet his fame now fills the world as the man of men next to the Messias, the Conqueror of Pharaoh, the Leader of Israel, and the Giver of the Law to all mankind. At Moses' cradle learn never to scorn a poor child because he is poor. Children easily despise their poor neighbours, and call them mean, and low, and shabby. I have known children taunting the poor with being little people because they had a little house and a little income, and kept no servants, just as if any of these things could make the heart and life little or great. It is very stupid to think so ; for most of our famous men were poor boys, or the sons of the poor. Who are our merchant princes ? Many of them are like the Lord Provost who died lately. He was honoured everywhere, and had received a title from the Queen. The newspapers told us that he came to Glasgow a tailor's apprentice with half-a-crown a week. Many of our noble families had quite as humble, and many of them had not so creditable an origin. Often the child of poverty has, like Moses, stood before kings, and proved himself kinglier than they. Let not the poor be discouraged ;

let not the rich be proud. Let no girl in rustling silks despise the girl in hempen home-spuns, the work of a mother's love. Take care lest the poorest in our mission district should pass the richest of you in life's race, and leave you lagging behind out of sight.

But it is very sinful as well as very senseless to despise the poor. God never does so. Have you not heard that Joseph was taken from the dungeon, Moses from the mire, and Daniel from the lion's den? Were not the first apostles fishermen? And was it not the case that our Lord in the days of His flesh had not where to lay His blessed head?

Before leaving it, take another look at Moses' cradle. Ah, the baby's beauty makes us glad! 'Tis the human face divine. He is "a goodly child;" "exceeding fair;" or "beautiful to God," Stephen calls him: he has an heavenly beauty. And his was not the beauty of the body only; for there was a nameless something about him that showed him fitted for great things, and roused his parents to special efforts to save him: his body borrowed its beauty from the soul within. I have come to know hundreds of our poorest children, and have often been struck with their beauty, which shone through all their hardships. What fine powers of body and mind and heart many of them have! What cleverness! what wit! what kindly feeling! In their beautiful eyes you may notice the beamings of a promising soul. Indeed, I have sometimes wondered whether God's bounty had not endowed them so richly with these better

gifts in order to make up for the want of what money can buy. Imitate Pharaoh's daughter whom you bless and admire. Turn not proudly or coldly away from the forsaken child ; yield to the pity his cry stirs in your breast ; have compassion on him and help him, and God shall give thee good wages.

This child of poverty was also—

II. The Child of Providence.—God's providence is God's forethought, or foresight : His kind care over us in all things. I wish you would think about the wonders of providence. Take an instance from your schoolbooks. This nineteenth century has been shaped by the battle of Waterloo. And God did it all with a few drops of rain. The rain on the night before the battle made the clayey soil slippery, so that the French could not get their guns forward till the sun had dried the ground. But for the rain, Napoleon would probably have won. Again, the fate of Europe was decided on that day by the shake of a peasant's head, who acted as Napoleon's guide. He was asked whether there was any hollow between him and the British. He shook his head by way of answering No. The French galloped into a chasm and were slain. Again, in the afternoon the victory lay in the hands of a cowherd who was guiding the Germans. Had he not led them by the shortest road, our soldiers must have yielded. An old friend of mine who was in the hottest of the battle, could never understand how the French did not beat them. The

victory was wondrous in his eyes as the doing of God. God's providence brings about the greatest things by means of the smallest; for three times over that battle turned on what seemed a mere trifle. Many believe that the future of France was changed again the other day—by a saddle flap. The Prince Imperial was mounting his horse when the leather in his hand broke. His horse dashed off; the Zulus caught him; and their assegais did the rest. A great preacher tells us that he might have been still in darkness but for a fall of snow one Sabbath morning in his boyhood. It turned him into a strange church where he was converted. Another great preacher tells us that if his dog had not barked one night, he should have been a soldier. God wished to overthrow Pharaoh, to free Israel that He might prepare them for Christ's coming, and so bless all nations:—and He made a babe cry. Had the babe cried a few minutes sooner, he might have drawn to him the crocodiles or the spies; had he not cried when he was brought to the princess, she might have passed straight on. It is common enough for a child to cry; why does the Bible, which often gives but a line to a nation's history, take such notice of a baby's tears? Ah! the world's future depended on these tears. The child cried in the very nick of time, and the child's cry moved the woman's heart in the proud princess. Her presence and the child's scream were perfectly joined by the great hand of providence, and the babe was saved to make the world's history. "And when she had opened (the ark), she saw

the child : and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him."

The dangers around the child Moses were very great. The Nile might drown him ; the sun by day or the moon by night might smite him ; the crocodiles were around, and the vultures above him ; there seemed no hope for the darling boy. The dangers around the most favoured children are perhaps as great, though not so easily seen. They are beautifully illustrated in the picture on the opposite page. The children are sound asleep, and over them are strewn their newly gathered flowers. But not far off a serpent rears its head ; a beast of prey is roaring ; a storm is gathering in the sky ; and the tide is advancing towards them. Yet they shall not perish, for the angels of Providence bend lovingly over them, holding in their hands the lily and the palm as emblems of peace and protection.

That picture is true to child-life everywhere. How feeble was the spark of life in your infancy ! A breath of wind might have blown it out. When I read books about the human body, I am filled with wonder that any one of us is kept in health : there are so many ways in which our life might be lost. The poet truly says,—

" Our life flows from a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone ;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

Believe firmly, then, that God is on earth as well as in heaven, and that His hand is in small things no less than



THE DANGERS OF CHILDHOOD.

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in great. And think how much you owe to His fatherly providence. Your mother may have done all a mother could, your Miriam may have watched over you, but it was God's providence that placed you in the ark of safety which has carried you on to this good hour. And you should thank Him also for unseen and unknown deliverances. A minister at a conference once asked his brethren to thank God on his behalf. On the way he had nearly lost his life by a fall from his horse. Another minister rose and said that he had a still greater mercy to thank God for. He had come along the same road, and met with no accident whatever. The whole web of your life is woven with mercies. For you too are a little Moses, a child of Providence, always ready to perish, but rescued by the hand of God from many deaths. Cease not to praise Him for His works of wonder.

Moses was also—

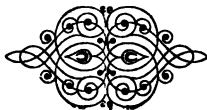
III. The Child of Grace.—Grace saved him from his greatest dangers. Through the palace a dark river ran, drowning men's souls in perdition. Vices more deadly than the crocodiles were rife around him. He found plagues in Pharaoh's court more frightful than any he afterwards sent into it. I imagine that no youth ever had greater temptations than Moses. He had to ask himself, "Shall I be a slave, or a sovereign? Shall I turn my back for ever upon these gay, dashing Egyptians, with all their wit, and wealth, and beauty? Must I forsake for ever her who saved my life, and made me her

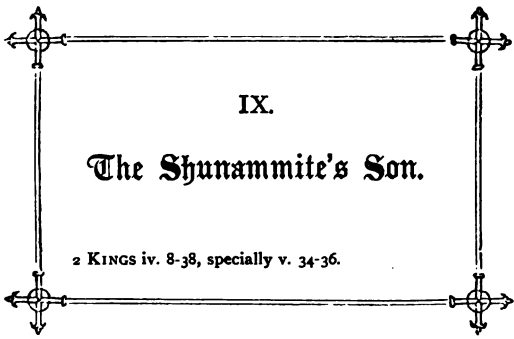
adopted son ?" "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. xi. 24). His character was formed by that choice : his blessed life was a harvest from that one seed. The choice you make between Christ and the world, makes you. The Holy Ghost cannot repent for you, or believe for you, or choose for you : like Moses, you must choose for yourself. And all the temptations and sinners in the world cannot make you Christless unless you choose to be so. Nothing can really harm you but yourself. Your single will, aided by the grace of God, can defy the whole universe. All Egypt was weaker than the will of the child Moses. Notice that Moses' choice was most *reasonable*, though to the Egyptians it seemed sheer madness. He reasoned admirably. Into one scale he put the privileges of a prince, the pleasures of sin for a season, and the treasures in Egypt : into the other scale he put the wrath of the king, affliction with the people of God, the reproach of Christ, and the recompense of the reward. He calmly weighed the two, and then decided. He preferred Christ's side at its worst to the world's at its best. You know now that he acted most wisely. William Wilberforce and William Pitt were two young members of Parliament, and bosom friends. Wilberforce

after much thought made the choice of Moses. He feared that Pitt would laugh at him ; but frankly declared his choice, and his reasons for it. Pitt at once replied, "If there be any truth in the Bible, you have acted most reasonably." Yes, they who act otherwise are the fools, and the irrationals.

Moses' was also a *joyous* choice. Think not that he was the most wretched youth in Egypt when he forsook Egypt's gods. Ah, no. His choice would pain him in many ways ; but then he had the deep satisfaction of having done what was right. He had better joys than the Egyptians dreamt of. You have heard of the Sirens, who sang so sweetly in their flowery isle, that whosoever did but hear them was lured to ruin. Ulysses filled his sailors' ears with wax, and made them tie him with thongs to the mast, and then steer the ship within ear-shot of the Sirens. Another crew, the old fables say, once passed that isle. With them sailed Orpheus, who had been taught the music of heaven. When the Sirens began singing, Orpheus tuned his lyre and sang his divine melodies. Earth's music seemed in comparison a rude, jarring noise : the sailors' hearts beat fast within them, and they turned away from the deadly isle. The chains of delight which bound them were stronger than the thongs which held the struggling Ulysses at the mast. Thus the Sirens of Egypt had no charm for Moses the moment his ear caught the sweet music of heaven. He deliberately preferred it ; he gladly chose it ; and then the stream of his affections set heavenwards,

And he must have made in his *boyhood* this choice which he publicly confessed as soon as he came of age. Like him, choose Christ in youth, and declare your choice. You gather fresh flowers for your friends; and will you offer Christ only an old withered flower, that has lost all its beauty and perfume? Will you keep Christ standing at your heart's door till His locks are wet with the dews of the night? Are you asked to do anything dreadful in coming to Him now? Your good inclinations are not enough: real decision is required. Some young people are like the leaning tower of Pisa: they incline to the right side for years, but never go over to it. This is the reason why many of our young men who go abroad cease to profess religion. Their hearts are like many of the new houses here—"To Let," "To Let, Unfurnished." The first offerer may take and inhabit them. Thus mammon, or sinful pleasure, or infidelity occupy hearts in youth which should have chosen Christ in boyhood. Let Moses make you ashamed of your shame,—he, the young hero, who braved the scorn and laughter of all Egypt for Christ's name sake. My heart's desire for you is, that you may now yield yourself unto the Saviour, and cleave unto Him all your days. Amen.





IX.

The Shunammite's Son.

2 KINGS iv. 8-38, specially v. 34-36.





THIS is the first children's service in our new Sanctuary, and I cannot do better to-day than show you what the Church wishes to do for you. By the Church I mean not this beautiful building, but the whole company of the faithful throughout the world. The Church is not some great machine, but a union of living hearts in whom God dwells. The part of the Church you have specially to do with embraces your Christian parents, your teachers, and your minister. Now the Church wishes to do for you what Elisha did for the Shunammite's son. It was harvest-time then. I never saw a healthy boy about a farm-house, who did not find his way to the harvest field. The gleaming sickles, the large company, the merry laughter, the wonders the reapers sometimes reveal in the bared field,—all these have a potent spell over a boy. "And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father to the reapers" (ver. 18). I imagine that he was not a very big boy, as he kept by his father's side among the reapers. The sun was very strong, and, perhaps forgetting

his mother's advice, he threw off his head-dress. He thus got sunstroke, which brought on brain fever. The poor boy moaned to his father, "My head, my head." As the father could not be spared from the field at that busy time, he said to a lad, "Carry him to his mother." On her lap he sat till noon,—where else would a sick child sit?—and then he died. At once she saddled her ass, and set off to Carmel for Elisha. The prophet sent on Gehazi to meet her, but she did not make her sorrow known to that hard man, for with a mother's quick instinct she felt his lack of sympathy. Elisha came himself to her house, and shut himself up with the boy's dead body. Having prayed unto the Lord, "he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm." Then he walked to and fro, like a man greatly in earnest, and stretched himself again upon the child, and the child sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes. If you have not the true faith of Jesus Christ, your soul is like that boy's dead body. As an idiot boy has a dead mind in a living body, so you have by nature a dead soul in a living mind: you are dead in trespasses and sins. The Church longs, Elisha-like, to stretch herself upon you, and warm you into new life, that you may be a strength and a joy to your spiritual mother. Oh God, who quickenest the dead, bring our dead to spiritual life; and to Thee shall be all the praise!

The Church is like Elisha, for it

- I. Touches you.*
- II. Fits you.*
- III. Warms you into life.*
- IV. Makes you a blessing.*

I. The Church touches you, though you sometimes, like this dead boy, do not heed or feel the touch. It touches you as gently as Elisha's warm breathing flesh touched the cold flesh of the boy. And it touches you in every part. For the Church is represented not by Gehazi laying his hard staff upon the child's face, but by the living Elisha stretching himself upon the dead. In how many ways has the Church touched you? It touches you through its one book, for the Bible is the only religious book in the world that shows a warm side to children, and speaks specially to them. How many of its texts are for you? Christ is the Head of the Church, and from heaven He still touches children as He touched them in the days of His flesh. Men sometimes touch you with a gloved hand; but when they wish to show you much kindness, they take off their glove and touch you with the warm naked hand. And the hand of Christ upon you is a naked hand, warmed by His heart. At once you think of His taking the little children in His arms, and of His touching the lepers into health. And His Spirit often touches you very deeply and very gently. A missionary from the South Seas told

me lately that fear has made all the gods in these parts, and that everything about them strikes terror into their worshippers. How different is our God! How gently do Father, Son, and Spirit touch you! I am sure that your Christian parents, your Sabbath teachers, and your minister all wish to touch your hearts in the same way. We wish Elisha's spirit of prayer and deep affection. We long to get as near your heart as he got near the body of the boy. We would press gently but powerfully upon you, and hope to feel your heart waxing warm and throbbing under the pressure. We wish each of you to feel that this building is for you, that the prayers and praises here are for you, that the sermons are for you, that the Bible is for you, that the Saviour is for you, that heaven is for you. We wish you to feel that all about the Church is for you, and that you are for the Church.

II. The Church fits you, for it fits itself to you.

If you put on my glove, it touches you, and touches you at many points, but it does not fit you. Watch the prophet laying himself upon the boy. He is far bigger than the boy; but he draws himself together and makes himself small, so that every part of his body may touch the child: he carefully adapts himself to the child. Massillon once preached a course of sermons to Louis was then the nine-year-old king of France. hearers said to the preacher, "You seem to d the prophet, who, in order to bring to life be Shunammite, contracted, as it were, his

dimensions by placing his mouth upon the mouth, his eyes upon the eyes, and his hands upon the hands of the child ; and, having thus brought back the vital heat, restored him alive and strong to his mother." I greatly wish that much of what is said and done here may so exactly fit you, that you shall never have a strange, far-off feeling in this place. Be sure that the great truths for whose sake this building has been reared, fit your mind and heart as well as your shoes fit your feet, or as your best made clothes fit the mould of your body. For Christ lowers His vast mind to our level, and teaches us truth as we are able to bear it. No mother teaches her infant so gently as the Book and Spirit of God teach the teachable child. The Bible truth is likened to bread ; and bread is for boys and girls no less than for older folks. It is likened to water, which perfectly fits itself to little lips. And it is often likened to light. My eye is bigger and stronger than yours, yet the blessed light finds its way into your eye as easily as into mine. Its equal rays enter hovel and palace, and bring health and joy to babe and giant alike. Nothing else in the world but the gospel has a greater power of shaping itself to all persons and places. I hope that all who do Christ's work among you may be as successful as was a poor working man of whom a lady told me lately. One evening he took the class in which she was then a scholar. She felt that every word he spoke was for her. He opened out the meaning of the words "for Christ's sake" ; and now, after some twenty-five years, she still remembers her warm gratitude

to that poor man. He made her feel that God's word fitted her, and that she could understand it.

The fact that the Church is fitted for all should make your hearts right glad. Robert Moffat once entered the house of a Boer, or African farmer. "What is your trade?" asked the farmer. "Oh, I preach the Gospel," was the reply. "Well, preach it to me," the farmer said. "I will gladly do so," Mr. Moffat rejoined, "but would you not first bring in your Caffres?" "Caffres!" exclaimed the farmer in scorn, "you might as well preach to my dogs." Mr. Moffat opened his Bible at the story of the Syrophenician woman, and read:—"It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto the dogs. And she answered, Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "Stop!" cried the farmer, and at once brought in his Caffres; and the missionary told them words whereby all of them might be saved. Nothing in the world should be more popular than the religion of Jesus Christ, for it equally fits old and young of every age and nation.

III. The Church would also fain warm you into life.—Give me your best attention here. You have got a shock of electricity. You joined hands with one whose hand was on the jar; and in a moment the spark passed from his hand into yours, and thrilled your whole body. In some such way the spark of life passed from Elisha into the boy. In one of the chapels at Rome they show you a great picture of God creating Adam. Though

I dislike the idea of the picture, I may use it as an illustration. Adam has a perfect body, but as yet no soul. God in human shape bends over Adam; His finger touches Adam's finger; a spark of God's fire flashes into Adam's body; and he lives. This boy's body was like Adam's in the picture; and at Elisha's touch life streamed out of the living into the dead. Two cases will show my meaning. The Church had begun to touch and warm into life the soul of a watchmaker's apprentice, who was living among a godless set. He is in the house of God one Sabbath evening; and I wish that you had his spirit of hearing. He is sitting behind the clock in the front of the gallery; perhaps his craft has decided his choice of a seat. The sermon fits him, and he grows afraid that it will be done before his difficulties are removed. He cannot stay the sun and moon, like Joshua, but he takes hold of the pendulum now and then, and stops the clock for a minute or two. The preacher, who is timing his sermon by the clock, launches out freely into his subject. That boy became a well-known pastor—Mr. Brock of London. My other case is from Rajatea in the South Seas. In a distant corner of that island Mr. Williams one day came upon a miserable fragment of a man named Butewe, whose hands and feet had been cut off by his cruel chief. Butewe crawled towards him and said, "Welcome, thou servant of Jehovah, who hast brought into our dark island the light of the gospel. I thank thee for the word of salvation." Williams, having never seen the man before, asked him,

"But what do you know about salvation?" Butewe gave him a very clear account of the way of life, and declared that the gospel had made him a *Jesus-man*. In amazement Williams asked how he had gained his knowledge. "When the people go home from church," he replied, "I hobble among them, and beg bits of your sermon. I get a piece of it from one, and a piece from another; I then gather all up in my heart, and pray over it; and so I know a little of God's holy Word." That poor man had put away his heathen vices, and was adorning the doctrine of his Saviour in all things. Shall the last be first, and the first last? Shall such children of darkness arise at the great white throne, and condemn you for having lived a heathen life amid Christian light?

Elisha, the man of God, and the man of prayer, felt deeply the sorrows of the Shunammite, and yearned over her dead child. Respect and love such people, and keep as near them as you can; for they may do as much for your souls as Elisha did for the young Shunammite. The Creator Spirit dwells in them, and gives them the highest power under heaven and often makes them creators of a blessed life in others. Often the fire of heaven passes from them into other hearts. Let them breathe their holy thoughts into you; open your souls to theirs; and flee from everything that lessens their influence over you. Pray that their spirit may touch yours, or rather that God's Spirit may touch you through them, and then you shall be warmed into a new life that shall live for ever in the paradise of God.

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THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

You will then be—

IV. A Blessing in the Church and in the World, like the revived boy in the home of the Shunammite. It was a scene of unspeakable tenderness when Elisha called in the mother, and, pointing to the living child, said, "Take up thy son." Not a word did she speak: her heart was too full for that. She fell at Elisha's feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out. She most naturally wished to be alone with her boy and her God. Men sometimes speak of the mother-Church. The name is fitting, for the Church is often like the Shunammite, when she laid her dead boy upon the prophet's bed. When Christ is despised and rejected of the young, she is like childless Rachel crying, "Give me children or I die." Like a weeping childless mother she has often to carry her spiritual dead upon her heart, and beseech the Lord to raise them to life. But when the young yield themselves to the Saviour she is like the Shunammite when, overcome with joy, she bowed herself to the ground, and folded her living son in her bosom. That was the day of days in her history. And the chief crown and joy of any flock is the fresh, warm life of young Christians, who have life before them, and who mean by God's help to lay themselves upon His holy altar. Our prayer is, that here and in every place of worship the young may be touched, and moved, and saved, and made mighty blessings to the Church and the world. When the Lord

writeth up the people, may it be said of our sanctuary, that this boy and that girl was born there. We beseech Thee, O God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to accept this building which we have devoted to Thy service, and grant that, while these walls stand, it may be the birth-place of many young immortals. And to Thy marvellous grace shall we give all the praise, both now and ever. AMEN.



X.

The Hebrew Maid.

2 KINGS v. 1-4.





THREE thousand years ago, Syria and Israel were as bad neighbours as England and Scotland were in the days of Wallace and Bruce. They were often waging Border wars, and always making plundering raids upon each other. One day a little Israelitish village in a quiet valley near the border of Syria was surprised by a band of Freebooters. Their flashing shields and spears are seen on the brow of the hill: they dash down like the wolf on the fold: they stab the men who try to resist: they take the women and children as slaves: they drive off all the cattle; and leave the village a heap of smoking ruins. Among the wailing captives was a little girl, whom the captain of the company made a present of to the wife of his general, Naaman. Like harriers, they broke the nest beneath the unfledged bird, and carried away the lonely, trembling thing. Her sorrows were greater than you can easily understand. Buried she was without warning beneath a wave, and stunned with another, and another,

before she had time to take breath. Torn from her mother and her playmates at the age of seven or eight, and hurried amid all the alarms of war to a foreign land; robbed at once of home, freedom, and childhood,—what lot was harder than hers! As we open up her case, your pity for this stricken lamb will rise, I trust, into admiration and imitation.

I wish to point out to you—

I. Her Faith in God.

II. Her Faithfulness.

III. Her Fruitfulness.

I. We begin with her Faith in God.—Plainly she had very strong faith; and it was of the right sort. For there are wrong kinds of faith. The Russian army lately crossed the Danube, and planted itself in the heart of Turkey. The news spread like wildfire, and the fact was keenly discussed by three races: the Circassians, Roumanians, and Servians. They all equally believed the fact, and perfectly understood its meaning; but their belief led to very different results. The Circassians rose in rebellion against their Sovereign, Alexander II.; the Roumanians boldly went over to his side; while the Servians hesitated. "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," as the kingdom of Russia is come among the Turks. You believe the fact, but there is no virtue in such a belief by itself; for even the devils are trembling believers. Mere belief even of the truth

may be perfectly powerless. The question is, what side does your belief make you take? Do you, like the Roumanians, go wholly over to the side of the Deliverer; or do you, like the poor Servians, halt between two opinions? The ideas of the Servians are, it is understood, all on the side of Russia; but they are afraid: they lack courage: they wish to have the favour of two who are deadly enemies to each other: they do not wish to say Yea or Nay just now. Many are like these Servians, and as foolish and unhappy as they. They are plagued on both sides, like the Borderers in Scottish history. They are likely to lose both worlds in trying to gain and enjoy both. But your faith in Jesus should be as decided and powerful as was the faith of the Roumanians: it should take you clean over to His side: it should make you gladly venture your all on Him: it should be a living trust in a living person, a whole faith in the whole Saviour. Notice the beautiful signs of this girl's faith. In that land of idols and idolaters she was not ashamed to own her Lord. And her charity proved her faith sincere. What wonder if she had nursed revenge, and said in spite, "I'm glad my master is a leper: it is God's judgment upon him: it serves him right." How beautiful, how Christ-like her forgiving spirit! She forgave much. Her mistress would be often in tears. What availed fame and fortune when her lord was a leper? That great sorrow reconciled and equalised mistress and maid. The proud lady sought and received the sympathy of her trembling slave.

Evidently the girl's faith had not been shaken ; for she had full confidence that Israel's God could cure the leper.

We should like to know how she became such a believing child of God. The people of Israel were then desperately wicked. It was the time of Elijah, of Ahab and Jezebel ; and thousands had forsaken Jehovah for idols. But probably she had such a good mother as Timothy had. From her lips she learnt about the God of Abraham. Her mother's prayers were heard in heaven ; and when sin rioted around, faith found a home in the heart of this dear child. She was also taught, I believe, by the great sorrows, and even by the great sins of her times. Her faith was thus like the pure gold fresh from the glowing furnace. May God work in you the same spirit of faith, that you may also have—

II. *Her Faithfulness.*—Faithfulness is more than faith. As the Word shows, it is the *fulness* of faith. She had so much of the true faith that it filled her whole nature, and made her faithful under terrible trials. It wrought in her loving loyalty to her loving God : it made her leal-hearted. Peter had faith, but not enough of it to make him faithful in the palace of the High Priest. This girl was a lonely child in a heathen palace, which often rang with laughter at her religion. Probably she was the only worshipper of Jehovah there ; yet He seemed to have forsaken and rejected her. Then she might naturally think that by giving up her religion she would please her mistress. What a faithful heart ! What

a young heroine ! Hers was a nobler courage than the hero's on the battlefield.

How sad that many who go to heathen countries are faithless to their religion. They act as if their religion should be shaped by the region where they happen to dwell ; they are as the softest wax on which public opinion may set any stamp : men they are in this without manhood, who do not belong to themselves but to any owner who boldly claims them ; they are tossed about like pitiable atoms in the centre of a whirlwind. It used to be said that Englishmen left their consciences at the Cape, on their way out to India. A missionary writes that of about one hundred Englishmen in the heathen capital where he now labours, there are only six who have not disgraced themselves by bad living. The religion of our faithless fellow-countrymen abroad reminds us of the body of Charlemagne. At Aix-la-chapelle he had a chapel built like the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. There was he buried, according to his own orders, sitting on a marble chair, dressed in his robes of state, wearing his crown, with the sceptre in his hand and the Bible on his knees. The vault where his body lay was made air-tight, and was not disturbed till it was entered by the Emperor Otto III., some two hundred years afterwards. He found Charlemagne sitting as he had been left two centuries before ; but as the fresh air began to circulate through the vault, the body fell in with a crash ; and lo, there remained only a heap of ill-smelling dust and bones. The gilded dust had no life to give

it what we call *consistency*, or the power of holding together. The professed religion of some is like that royal corpse. At home they look all right ; but leave them for a little in the atmosphere of a heathen land, and what a change ! Their fair profession falls asunder of itself. It does not hold together till some strong destroyer smite it : let but the air play around it, and it is overthrown.

“ Like that long-buried body of the king
Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
Which at a touch of light, an air of heaven,
Slipt into ashes and was found no more.”

I can believe that our girl was all the more faithful because of the many faithless around her. In man or woman, in boy or girl, loyalty is one of the finest qualities ; and its noblest forms are far oftener found among girls than among boys, especially in days when the cause the faithful love is down-trodden. We greatly value this unselfish loyalty to a cause that seems lost. Hence the stories and songs about Prince Charlie are so very popular, even among those who have no faith in his pretensions. When he was hunted like a partridge among the Highland hills, his followers had a seal made, on which was engraven a fallen oak with ivy around it, and underneath were the words, “ I cleave to the fallen.” Just because their prince’s fortunes were so low did they feel bound by every principle of honour to be more faithful to him than ever. Only dastards would forsake him in his day of distress. The apostasy of Israel and

the idol worship of Syria would in some such way rouse the faithful heart of this young Hebrew. She belonged to the race who hung their harps on the willows by the rivers of Babylon and said, as they wept, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

The Bible is always pleading with us to be loyal to God, and true to our trust, whatever it may be. This girl knew well the first five books of the Bible; and in them are hundreds of verses in which Moses beseeches her forefathers to be faithful to their covenant-God. There she would read that of the generation in the wilderness only Caleb and Joshua were perfectly faithful; and over the sacred page she would pray that the spirit of these two men might pass into her. To you her God says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

It is now time to study

III. Her Fruitfulness.—"Nothing but leaves," cannot be applied to her. Seeming the meekest human being in Syria, she proved one of the mightiest. What a treasure she was in the house of Naaman! What a blessing to the land! Her influence was like the great powers of nature, which work so quietly and gently. In a library the other day I read through the glass door the title of a book, "Great Things Done by Little People." Here is one of the greatest of them. She might have

counted herself quite useless in the world, but she had the spirit of a Christian worker who used to say, "I am but one, but I am one. I cannot do much, but I can do something; and all that I can do I ought to do, and by God's grace will do." Thus she became really a great apostle and missionary. By her the true religion was known and respected in Syria, and Namaan became a worshipper of Jehovah; and so she has been thought worthy of a large place in God's book. You see that the humblest people who have faith and faithfulness may hope to be fruitful in good works.

"He that of greatest works is finisher
Oft does them by the weakest minister;
So holy writ in babes hath judgment shown
When judges have been babes. Great floods have flown
From simple sources."

I remember visiting a nursery maid who was the spiritual sister of this Hebrew maid. She used to weep, she told me, because she could do no work for Christ. But she had found out her mistake. For her old mistress had come to her with a message from her departed daughter. The nurse used to teach the children hymns, and tell them about the Friend of children. One of them had just died as a young Christian, and on her death-bed made the mother promise that she would find out her old nurse, and thank her for what she had taught them. The child's death had brought a new life into the family. The mother warmly thanked the nurse in her own name, and in the name of the dead.

But take care not to fall into a mistake here. You may fancy that you are to do good only by a great and happy effort once in a while. "How long did you take to paint that picture for which you ask £100?" a gentleman once said to a famous painter. "Two days," he replied. "And do you expect £100 for the work of two days?" "You forget," answered the painter, "that my whole life was a preparation for the work of these two days." So a few words from this girl moved the household of Naaman; but it was her whole life that prepared her for giving these few words at the right time, and in the right way. It was because she was so good that she did so much good so easily. Her fruit was like the fine fruit in your gardens, which owes something to every part of the tree, and to every day of the tree's life.

Very likely her mind was sometimes darkened with doubts about her hard lot. In the reign of the Bloody Mary there was a good minister, Bernard Gilpin, who under his many crosses used to say, "All is for the best." In dark days his neighbours often asked him tauntingly, "Is all for the best now?" "Yes," he would cheerfully reply, "All is for the best." He was summoned to London to be tried for heresy. He expected death at the stake; but started, saying, "All is for the best." On the road near Oxford his leg was broken by an accident. "All is for the best," he still said, and fretted not. Upon his recovery word came that the Queen was dead, and that he was at liberty.

Again he said, "All is for the best." The day came when this little captive saw what she struggled to believe from the first, that all was for the best.

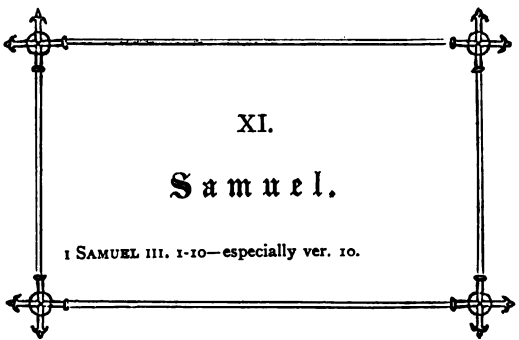
"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall burst
In blessings on your head.
His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

This maid directed her master to the waters that healed his leprosy. He had a disease which man could not, but which God could cure : so have you. He was pointed to the right remedy : so are you. He came proudly to the prophet, fancying that he must bring a great gift in his hand, and do some great thing. The desire to do some great thing is not confined to the Syrian. He came with notions of his own, which were all wrong : and we often do so. He had to give up his own ways and thoughts, and take God's simple plan : so must we when we go to the fountain of cleansing. The leper's flesh was hard, and cracked, so that every motion gave him pain. Such was Naaman when he went down to Jordan ; and such is the soul in sin. When he plunged seven times in the stream, his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. How clean, how exquisitely yielding is the flesh of your baby brother or sister ! Such was Naaman when he came

out of Jordan ; and such is the soul cleansed from sin. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Come then to Christ's cleansing fountain. It is ever full, and ever flowing ; and the way to it stands open to all comers. Wash in it, and your soul shall be whiter than snow.







XI.

S a m u e l.

1 SAMUEL III. 1-10—especially ver. 10.





OF Bible boys Samuel is a chief favourite. One reason is, that somehow our hearts are drawn to a child whom others dearly love. I lately saw a little girl in whom everybody was deeply interested. She was an orphan who had been adopted ; and in her case adoption seemed to equal nature in love ; and the love lavished upon her at home begat love for her among all who knew her. Now Samuel was Hannah's child ; and she was remarkable for her much love and prayer. Thus our interest in her passes over to him, and her love for him passes over to us.

“ So for the mother's sake the child is dear,
And dearer is the mother for the child.”

But the main reason why Samuel is such a favourite is, that nothing under the sun is more beautiful than piety in childhood. Nothing like grace for making the young *graceful*. Samuel means, “asked of the Lord.” The child of many prayers, he was from the first devoted to God by his mother ; and in the morning of life he gave himself to God, and never drew back. Girded with his

little linen ephod, with his flowing locks, he stands forth as the perfect pattern of early piety. That is the reason why "he was in favour with the Lord, and also with men" (1 Samuel ii. 26). Martin Luther in his gentler moments dwelt with great tenderness on the boyhood of Samuel. He found in him what he longed to see in his own boys, and in all boys. The spirit that made Samuel the boy and the man he was, is revealed in his ready reply to the voice of God. When God called, "Samuel, Samuel," he answered at once, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel iii. 9). There you have as in a nutshell the history of a child of God.

I. The Lord Speaking.

II. The Child Hearing.

III. The Child Serving.

The leading word of each division is in the text, which speaks of the Lord's mouth, the child's hearing ear, and the child's obedient heart.

I. The Lord Speaking.—"But does God speak to me?" you ask. Yes he does, *in His Providence*. In this land of Sabbaths, and churches, and Bibles, and Christians, God is always speaking to you. Did He not speak to you in the first human voice that reached your infant mind? Might you not say with Coleridge, "My faith in Christianity is bound up with my mother's chair, and with the earliest remembered tones of her blessed

voice?" And did not God speak to you in that illness? "Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." Every rod of affliction has a voice, and it is the voice of God. A wild man, who was nearly killed by an accident, told me that he was not surer of his own existence, than he was of the fact that God was speaking to him.

And God speaks to you by *His word*. For His word is not like the word of a man in a book, a dull, dead thing; but in it you may hear God's living voice. The other day the newspapers told us that a woman had travelled from London to Balmoral to plead with the Queen for the lives of her two sons condemned to death. The people at Ballater took pity on her, and got her a seat in the mail gig. She sat on a bag of letters, one of which, from the Home Secretary, really granted her request. The Queen received her kindly, but could do nothing; the decision lay with the Home Secretary. The woman returned with a heavy heart; but when the Queen had read the welcome letter, she despatched a horseman with the glad tidings to the poor woman. The Word of God may do you no more good than that letter did to the poor woman when she sat upon the letter-bag; but it brings new life to you as soon as you catch in it the living voice of the living God. For while we cannot hear God's voice in heaven, we may hear it on earth in the blessed gospel. Dr. Duncan tells that the first time he felt that he had God's word on his lips, the idea went through him like a flash of electricity, and made him another man.

And God speaks to you by *His Spirit*. How often we read of the Spirit speaking to us,—“The Spirit and the Bride say, Come ;” “the Holy Ghost saith, To-day,” and so on. It is really the Holy Spirit that speaks to you in Providence and the Word. Oh how many voices come from God to you ! The air is all trembling with God’s voices if we only had the ear to hear them, and to distinguish them from the coarse voices of earth, that are always mingling with them. Your soul is like a shell with which I have seen a boy astonish his little sister. The shell put to her ear caused a quick play of wonder and delight, like the shadows of the clouds chasing each other upon the surface of a lake on a windy summer’s day. “How is the sound there?” she asked. The shell had been long in the sea, he said ; the sound of the waves had got into the very inside of it, and could never be taken out again ; the sea was still making music in it, though it had been on the dry land for a long, long time. The boy was just saying what the poet says,

“Pleased, it remembers its august abode
And murmurs as it murmured then.”

The voice of God resounds in your soul, as the voice of the sea was fancied to resound in that shell. Pray that you may hear not only the sound, but His voice ; and not only His voice, but His voice calling you by name, as when He said, “Samuel, Samuel.” Pray that you may hear Him whispering in your ear the secret which is for yourself alone,

It is time now to turn to—

II. The Child Hearing.—Your ear is one of the main gateways of the soul. A man of science calls it “a harp of three hundred strings,” and it is made up of many wonders. But far more wonderful is the inner ear of the heart, or the conscience, by which you hear the noiseless voice of God. You have great power over the ear of the body; you may spoil it, close it, or improve it. You may do what Ulysses’ sailors did when with cakes of wax they closed their ears against the song of the Sirens. You have a like power over the ear of the heart. The Bible describes some whose ears have been closed, or grown gross, so that they cannot hear God’s voice. Many on purpose make themselves deaf to the divine voice. Sages of old believed that heaven was full of music, star singing to star, and all uttering a glorious voice, which, however, was heard only by gifted ears. So the voice from heaven comes only to him who hath an ear to hear it. Oh, have you a good ear for this music? It is astonishing how quick the ear grows to hear anything we wish to hear. The owner of a large factory told me that, as soon as he reached the gate, his ear informed him if one wheel was out of order. His keen interest had trained his ear to detect the slightest jar. An Indian, by laying his ear to the ground, and hushing his breath, can discover the approach of a horseman at the distance of miles. His ear is as quick as the ear of the hare, or of the deer. A blind man finds his

way safely through crowded streets, guided, say rather enlightened by the ear, which practice has so perfected that it serves for eye also. A sleeping mother will hear the gentlest movement of her suffering child, and awake to help it. Her mother's love calls her listening soul into her ear: her heart makes her all ear. Thus the ear within the soul may be trained to know even the gentlest whisperings of God's voice. Show me a child who heartily wishes to hear God's voice, and I will at once show you a child who has a quick ear for God's voice. He may mistake the voice at first: Samuel did so. His mistake shows us that God's voice must have been very gentle, for the boy took it for the voice of the gentle Eli, who could not speak harshly, even to his erring sons, and who was all love to Hannah's little boy. But if you mistake God's voice, He will speak to you again and again till you know both the speaker and His message; and then you will be like this delighted child when he lay listening to his name pronounced by Jehovah's lips. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice," and they know the voice to be His, and follow Him without fear. I have seen on the boards of some child's Bible a picture in gold of the child Samuel, the light streaming in upon him when he says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He is well placed there as an example to all children, for his spirit is the spirit in which you should come to God's holy word,

Look now at—

III. The Child Serving.—"Thyservant," he called himself. He was one of the ministering children of the Bible, for in his childhood, "he ministered before the Lord." He was one of those children—and there are many of them—who have no distinct conversion, and who cannot remember a time when they did not love the Lord. Richard Baxter was one of these. He was sometimes distressed because he could not remember the day and date of his conversion, but he cast aside his useless fears, and thanked God that he had brought him so early into his fold.

Hannah lent Samuel as a loan to the Lord, who had need of him. There was room for the services of a child in God's house then, and there is room now. The very sight of that fine promising boy, so hearty and so handy in the Lord's service, would cheer the sinking heart of the aged Eli, whose sons were sons of Belial. It would be a token that the cause he loved so well would not perish from the earth, but that others would cherish it when he was dead and gone. Now you will be a true servant of God from your youth up if your obedience is, like Samuel's, prompt, hearty, and life-long. His obedience was *prompt*. When he was first called, he was in his first sleep, and sleeping soundly, as a healthy child does soon after going to bed. But at once he starts out of his warm bed, and runs to Eli, and says, "Here am I." Four times he was called, and four times he obeyed without a murmur or a moment's delay. You could not have blamed him if, when the second call came, he had

said, "Oh, I'm frightened in the dark : there must be some mistake : I'll keep my warm bed this cold night." He was prompt in obeying Eli's voice (as he thought it) and God's. And those who obey promptly their earthly father's voice, are the most likely to obey the voice of their Father in heaven. Many plants are reared in the neighbouring nursery, and then planted out, and become great trees. Healthy obedience at home is like one of these plants. When transplanted into the soil of grace, it soon becomes a stately tree. Thus in many ways you are made or marred in the nursery. This is one reason why converted soldiers often make such splendid Christians. As soldiers they learn the habit of prompt obedience, which makes them also good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Samuel's obedience was also *hearty*: he put his whole heart into it. The trembling slave obeys promptly, but not heartily. He does his task at once, but would gladly not do it, if he dared. When a boy just gone to bed is quickly roused out of his sleep, he is usually in no mood for cheerfully running an errand ; yet Samuel was ready at every call with his "Here am I." We cannot obey God till we really love Him who first loved us. Your obedience is like a nut : the outward act is the shell, but the motive is the kernel. You take up a beautiful nut, and rattle it, and ask, "Is there a heart in it?" A rotten heart, or a shrivelled heart, makes it worthless ; and you fling the light thing away in scorn. So your acts are of no value unless love to God lies at the heart

of them. Jesus, as a child, had this spirit of service: "Lo, I come, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." You should surely be as hearty in living for Him, as He was in dying for you. As it is your glory to be loved of God, so it is the perfection of your being to love God; and it is the perfection of your love to obey promptly and heartily.

Notice also that Samuel's obedience was *life-long*. There is the closest connection between the heartiness and the continuance of our service. In all African and Arctic Expeditions the leaders, though usually less hardy in body, hold out longer than the men; and the reason is that they have a heartier interest in the work. As Samuel's whole heart was in God's service, he kept in it unto the end. The child hearing and obeying God's voice was the father of the man; the ministering child was the making of Samuel, the Judge and Prophet of Israel, the greatest man of his day. My text was his motto all through life. While in power and intellect a giant, he was ever in heart a child, saying night and day, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Begin young, begin fair. I know very well that the greatest sinners may be saved when they are old; but oh, how many drawbacks they have in this world, and, for anything we know, in the world to come. I am sure that the Christians, who have had the happiest and most fruitful lives, usually began the service of Christ betimes, like Samuel. A postmaster told me lately that he could send a telegraphic message by taking time, but that he could

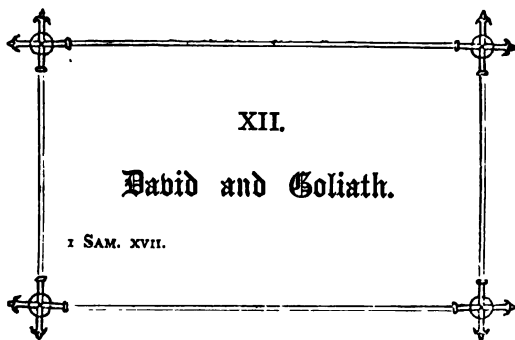
never learn to receive one quickly enough. Only those who learn the art in youth can learn it well. And the Christian service is like the telegraphic. The highest success belongs only to those who begin as Samuel began. They are seven times blessed whose hearts in youth and always reply to the speaking God, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

"O give me Samuel's ear
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word ;
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all.

O give me Samuel's heart,
A lowly heart that waits,
Where in Thy house Thou art,
Or watches at Thy gates ;
By day and night, a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will.

O give me Samuel's mind,
A sweet un murmuring faith,
Obedient and resigned
To Thee in life and death :
That I may read, with child-like eyes,
Truths that are hidden from the wise."





XII.

David and Goliath.

1 SAM. xvii.





HOW much there is in the Bible to interest all sorts of people! I will give you one illustration. In 1845 Hugh Miller, as he tells us in his "First Impressions of England," visited Olney, the home of the poet Cowper. It was then a Babel of blackguards. He thought that all the bad-looking fellows in England had been drawn together there. Two prize-fighters, named Bendigo and Caunt, were about to fight for the championship and three hundred guineas. After ninety-three rounds Bendigo beat. Hugh Miller saw him after the fight standing at the door of a whisky shop, with his face all bruised. What would Hugh have said if any one had prophesied that that battered pugilist should be "born again" in his old age, and become an earnest student of the Bible, and worker for Christ. The idea of that man taking to the Bible! Not very likely. Like Sarah, he might have laughed at the prophecy. The scene changes. Thirty years have passed, and Bendigo is now about sixty years of age, and is in jail for the twenty-seventh time. One Sabbath he hears in prison what you

are now to hear, an address on David and Goliath. I will give you the result as I read it in "The Daily Telegraph." Bendigo listened, as the subject was just in his line. He understood it all: Goliath was just another Caunt. He forgot where he was, so interested was he; and at the close bawled out, "Bravo, I'm glad the little 'un won." He kept thinking about it in his cell, and decided that somebody must have helped the little one to kill the big giant. Next Sabbath the sermon was on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He fancied that the name of the third was *Bendigo*, and said to himself, "If one Bendigo may be saved, why not another?" The subject for the following day was "the twelve fishermen:" again he was thoroughly interested, as he was a keen fisher himself. The next sermon was about the seven hundred left-handed men in the twentieth chapter of Judges: once more he is all ear, being himself a left-handed man. That Bible seemed to him a very strange book: it was all written for himself! Upon getting out of jail he found his old companions waiting for him; but he declared that he would never enter another public house. He went to a mission meeting, and that very night, on his way home, he fell on his knees in the snow, and yielded himself to the Saviour. He had been in twenty-one matched fights, and had not been beaten in one; but, said he, "when I came to the Cross of Christ, I was quite beat at the first round." He was then doing his desperate utmost to master the A B C, that he might be able to read God's blessed Book; and he wound up,

the reporter said, by declaring, "If God could save Bendy, he could save anybody."

The story of David and Goliath is a darling story with boys. It has given breathless delight to thousands. The nursery story of "Jack the Giant Killer" is such a favourite because it is like this Bible Story. I daresay you know more about David and Goliath than about Wellington and Napoleon: you have felt more interested in the battlefield of Elah than of Waterloo. Every young reader of this story becomes an anxious witness of the battle, and at once takes a side. You generously side with the weak, who battle for the right against the strong. Your heart leaps up with joy at David's bravery and victory. You are nearly as glad as if you had won the battle yourself. The moment the giant crashes on the plain you shout, "Well done, David!"

The story is a casket, and the spirit of David is its jewel. Come near, and I will open the lovely casket, and show you its lovelier jewel.

David fought—

- I. On God's Side.*
- II. In God's Strength.*
- III. As a Conqueror.*

I. David was on God's side.—This was a religious war. Goliath fought for Dagon, and cursed David by his gods. David fought for Jehovah. The battle is the Lord's, David said truly. David was careful

not so much to have God on his side, as to be on God's side, and do only God's will. Goliath rose before him like a mountain plated with iron and flashing brass: his spear a beam, his voice thunder. Behind him stood in battle array a mass of mailed men, bristling with spears like a forest, the sight of which made the hearts of the Israelites weak as water. At first we pity the stripling as being devoted to certain death. Yet without a quiver, or a moment's delay, he offers himself as the champion of Israel. For before, around, behind, above, his eye of faith beholds the awful, encompassing form of his great Ally, Jehovah, Lord of hosts. He knew that he was on God's side, and that God's side must be the winning side, because God is God, and man is man. Now, let every child know for certain that he is like David, a warrior and a champion. All earth is one battle-field, and from that battle you cannot run away. In every human heart, good and evil, heaven and hell meet in battle array. People speak about the giants you have to fight, but really you, like David, have one giant before you. He is the great adversary, the evil one, the Goliath of hell. Stripling as you are, you must accept his challenge for the duel. I am not forgetting what the Bible says about the devil and his angels, whose name is legion; about principalities, powers, and so on. Yet there is but one Goliath, who strides forth against you with sword and spear, while his angels, like the Philistines on the slopes of Ephes-dammim, crowd hill and dale in dark masses behind him. If you conquer your

Goliath, all his hosts will take to flight. You must not think lightly of this war in the town of Man-soul. Our soldiers in Zululand despised the Zulus, and hundreds of them were slain at Isandula. The remnant still despised their foes, and at Intombi lost their lives for their error. Even these two terrible warnings failed. For the Prince Imperial of France, with some seven or eight horsemen, rode in advance of the army, saying laughingly that they were strong enough ; and soon he perished miserably by the hands of the Zulus. An old Christian, who had hewn his way through the bloodiest scenes at Waterloo, laid his hand upon his breast, and said to me, "I never knew what fighting was till I began to fight with the enemy here. Waterloo was child's play to this."

But fear not, for you can be on God's side. You may then seem, but can never be, alone in the fight. Was David alone when he confronted Goliath? The bare thought of a good ally, or general, greatly heartens a fainting soldier. Wellington once ordered a captain to take a Spanish fort, before which many of his comrades had fallen. "Give me first a shake of your conquering hand, general," said the captain. They shook hands : the captain dashed forward, took the fort, and declared that the victory was owing to the touch of the general's all-conquering hand. What courage must it then give you to know that God is your shield, and Jesus Christ the Captain of your salvation. Flee from sin, put all your trust in the Saviour, and be guided always by God's

good Spirit ; and then may you be courageous even under the shadow of Goliath, and rise superior to fear though ten thousand foes be set against you.

II. In God's Strength David fought, else he was mad when he faced Goliath. God's Spirit gave him his holy courage, suggested his weapons, and guided the stone from the sling to Goliath's crashing temples. Was not David the man after God's own heart because he so frankly owned God in everything ? His spirit shines in his beautiful confession, " Thy gentleness hath made me great." He could not bear, you remember, the bleating of a tortured lamb without risking his life to rescue it. He smote the lion and the bear. Did he boast over the exploit ? Oh no. Listen to him, " The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." To his dying day he had a deep feeling of the turns and surprises of the kind Providence that made the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem the Prince of Israel. All noble natures have this spirit which made David so simple, modest, and loyal. It also made him capable of calling forth and returning a love passing the love of women. No feature in boy or girl, in man or woman, is more beautiful than this gentle and modest spirit, which makes its possessor even as a weaned child ; and you shall have a good share of it if you feel that you owe every good thing to God's boundless and unbought mercy. This spirit is no mark of a soft and cowardly

nature, for it was the spirit of Israel's champion and Goliath's conqueror. The lion and the lamb lie down together in gracious hearts. I wish you to admire this fine mood of David's mind. It made him so healthy, and so natural, that he found joy in every condition of life. Thus even after he had been Saul's armour-bearer, and a favourite courtier, he cheerfully went back to shepherding ; and I should believe that he did not fret under the social down-come. You should also notice his tender courtesy to Saul in the cave, when he only cut off his skirt. Now the humblest person in the world may cherish the same spirit. At an infant's funeral a young grave-digger lately drew my attention. He put the earth in so softly at the sides of the little coffin, that the lid was gently covered without one rude *thud*. He did it almost as kindly as the mother tucks in the clothes around her babe in the crib. All the mourners had noticed his gentleness, and on the way home spoke of it gratefully. Yes, David's lofty spirit may be put into the humblest events. A poor needlewoman in her garret one day told me how she fought the Goliath of poverty. Though lonely and in poor health, she had won the battle. She looked a real heroine as her eyes expanded with exalted feeling, and she thus closed her story, "I may well say with David, 'Blessed be the Lord God, for He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.'" Her needle was perhaps used as nobly as David's conquering sword.

Now look at Goliath. What a horrid boaster, what a

rude swaggerer, swollen with pride and scorn! He counts nothing strong but his arm of flesh. His spirit shone in his very looks. The Rabbins say that as he strode towards David, he tossed his head in scorn, whereupon his helmet fell back and left his bare forehead a broad mark for David's stone. Thus his pride was his ruin.

Writers now-a-days give the name of Philistines to those who despise thought, and care only for bodily strength or money. But all worldly people are Philistines at heart, and their great ones are Goliaths; and big, bad, strong boys are among the most thorough Philistines we have. They have the rudest confidence in the rudest weapons. Their one desire is to excel in that wherein the beasts most excel. Not a fig care they for the poet's creed:

“Both swords and guns are strong, no doubt,
And so are tongue and pen,
And so are sheaves of good bank notes
To sway the souls of men.

But guns and swords, and gold and thought,
Though mighty in their sphere,
Are sometimes feebler than a smile,
And poorer than a tear.”

The world is full of the spirit of Goliath. Was it not the spirit of the Antediluvians, of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, of the Edomites, of the Canaanites, of Nebuchadnezzar? Is it not the spirit of the godless of every class and clime? David and Goliath represent two systems and two kingdoms. David trusts in the arm of

God, Goliath in the arm of flesh. The war between the Israelites and the Philistines is still raging : on which side are you ? If you are on God's side and fight with God's weapons, you shall be as—

III. David the Conqueror.—If you are not on God's side, yours shall be as sad a case as Goliath's when he fell down oppressed with his own weight, and was beheaded with his own sword, by the hand of the stripling whom he scorned. But if on God's side you shall win in the end, because God shall win, and all His shall win with Him. Their cause must triumph in His. The world's creed often is, that might is right ; ours is, that right is might, for God is with the right, and makes it at length almighty as Himself. This truth has made God's servants heroes at the stake, and on the scaffold ; it has made striplings strong with God's strength, and wise with God's wisdom, and though armed only with sling and stones, more than conquerors over earth's Goliaths. True, God's good soldiers do not always fare on earth as David did when his stone entered the giant's resounding skull ; but in their darkest days faith made them sure of utter and eternal victory. "Where wilt thou remain then ?" asked the Emperor Valens of Basil, who had refused to forsake Christ for idols. "Either under heaven, or in heaven," he calmly replied.

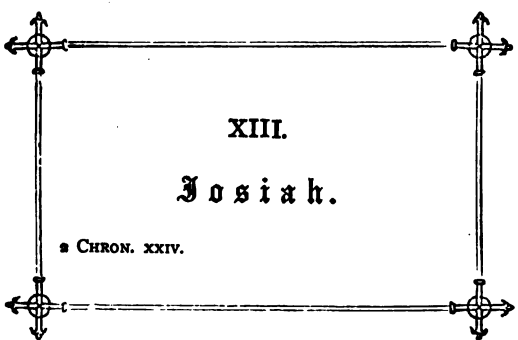
David, you know, is a type of His Son and Lord, our Saviour. He is our champion, who, in our defence, has slain hell's two Goliaths, Sin and Death. You should

love to think of Jesus Christ as having conquered all His and our foes. This grand fact makes the Bible full of holy triumph. Ours is a grand faith, as of men whose foes have been routed. As David triumphed not for himself only but for all Israel, so Christ triumphed for all his people. Our faith should then claim a share in all His triumphs. And every Sabbath morning should wake up afresh in us all these joyful feelings. For every Sabbath reminds us of that first day of the week when Christ burst the bonds of the grave, and triumphed gloriously. We should sympathise with the early Christians, who hailed each Sabbath morn with the words, "The Lord is risen indeed." Then should we join in spirit the shining company who sing in heaven the song of Moses and of the Lamb, though we can sing it here only with a stammering tongue, and marred music, and often with tears. I am now thinking of two specimens of this spirit of Christian triumph. A friend lies a-dying. All that is discouraging in the past rushes into his mind. He examines it all in the light of the great white throne, before which he must soon appear ; and then faces death without a fear, calmly taking his stand upon these words, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us ?" A company of believers meet around the coffin which holds the dust of one greatly beloved. The Goliath of death seems, but only seems, to triumph

over them all. For bolder words were never spoken than theirs, as they repeat without faltering, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, . . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Cling to Christ and His cross, and "by this thou shalt conquer." AMEN.







XIII.

J o s i a h .

* CHRON. XXIV.





MISS WHATLEY, in her "Ragged Life in Egypt," gives a description of the flat roofs of the houses in the East. These are usually covered with rubbish, old pitchers, sherds, and *pots*. A little before sunset, the pigeons fly out from behind the rubbish, where they have been sleeping, or pecking about for food. "They dart upwards," she says, "and career through the air in large circles, their out-spread wings catching the bright glow of the sun's slanting rays, so that they really resemble shining 'yellow gold,' then as they wheel round, and are seen against the light, they appear as if turned into molten silver, most of them being pure white, or else very light-coloured. This may seem fanciful, but the effect of light in these regions can hardly be described to those who have not seen it. Evening after evening we watched the circling flight of the doves, and always observed the same appearance. It was beautiful to see these birds rising, clean and unsoiled as doves always do, from the dust and dirt in which they had been hidden, and soaring aloft in the sky till nearly

out of sight among the bright sunset clouds. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold!"

Some of the Bible children are like these silver-winged and golden feathered doves. Unspotted by the world, they rose towards heaven, and as they rose, gave back the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness, rising higher and higher till they were lost to human view in the brightness above. Among these a foremost place belongs to Josiah, the boy-king. He was brought up in a palace stained with blood, and foul with the vilest sins, where virtue was a crime, and evil good. Yet though he had "lien among the pots," he arose from them like the white dove, and spent his life in the light of God. Like Joseph and Moses, he teaches you that bad people cannot compel you to be bad, unless you wish to be so. For a man is a man, the maker of his own acts, and by God's grace the creator of his own character. The will of this royal boy, guided by God's Spirit, was more than a match for all the wicked people in the land. They had all to bow to him as he would not bow to them.

Josiah was—

- I. An Early Seeker.*
 - II. A Hearty Hater.*
 - III. A Real Hero.*
 - IV. Missed and Mourned when he Died.*
-

I. Josiah was an Early Seeker.—Our Queen wears a velvet cap under her crown, lest it should hurt her head: this eight-year-old king had more need of such a covering. The crown was a heavy burden for his young shoulders, and the sceptre of an unwieldy bulk in his small hands. Yet there have been younger kings than he, who got a crown before they got out of the cradle. An old Norse king was called Olaf Lapking because he was a king while yet on his mother's lap. Perhaps no boys have a worse chance than young kings in an evil age. Historians make great allowances for them when they turn out ill. For one faithful instructor they have a thousand flatterers, who weave many a dark thread into the web of their history. Thus royal boyhood is often a poisoned boyhood. The people of Israel around little Josiah were doing worse than the heathen. His grandfather, Manasseh, had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, though there was a great change in him before he died. His father Ammon was a bad man, and was murdered by his people. And his murderers were murdered in their turn. The sins and sorrows of that time are described in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, whose heart they had broken. Yet Josiah at the age of eight did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and at sixteen he began to seek the God of his father David with more earnestness than ever. And he found; and became a wonder unto many, a royal miracle of grace. This boy will condemn you, if you are not an early seeker of God: you, who have so many

more encouragements than he had. God expects you to seek early : you can seek early ; and early seekers are sure finders. "Those that seek me early shall find me," God says. You are not to be always seeking : you are to find : you must decide for Christ. As He is really offered to you, you should close with Him now. Delay will not lessen your difficulties. In our Latin exercise books there was a story about the simpleton sitting one evening at the river's brink. A traveller coming up wished his company in crossing. "No," he replied, "I am waiting till the river flows past." The tiny stream of difficulties between you and Christ won't flow past, but will flow on, and broaden, and deepen, till it grows like an angry torrent swollen with winter floods, that threatens to sweep down the old man who would ford it. Oh, wait not, for the number of those who are converted in old age is comparatively very small. Take this great step while the dew of youth is fresh upon your soul. Even little children, I know, sometimes despair of themselves ; but why should they ? Is Christ anxious to cast them out ? Gladly yield yourself to Him ; and you also will become a royal Josiah, for the name means, healed or saved by Jehovah.

II. Josiah was also a Hearty Hater of Evil.
—"His heart was tender," we are told : he was as gentle probably as any woman in Judah ; for he was one of the choice spirits of the race, who are the delight of all the healthy-hearted. Yet, what a hater he was ! Read from

the third verse of the 34th chapter. In the twelfth year of his reign, and twentieth of his age, when, I fancy, he came to his majority, and became perfectly his own master,—then he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem. The people had forsaken Jehovah, and were worshipping idols. Josiah hated the idols just as much as he loved Jehovah : his hatred sprang from love, and was steeped in love. He did not love from a softness or easiness of nature, but the fire of God within him burnt into hatred and melted into love. Hence his was a great and terrible hatred : a burning, an overturning, a slaying hatred. Down went the idols, and up went the worship of Jehovah. His servants brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence (ver. 4). He must be present, and see the work thoroughly done. He feasted his eyes with the sight of the ruins, and no music was sweeter to his ear than the crash of the falling temples. And he brake the images in pieces, and ground every piece to powder, and scattered the powder to every wind. His hatred could not further go. His holy hatred was more thorough-going than the unholy hatred of the Paris communists ; for they were content with overthrowing the monuments, which have since been set up again. His hatred was in degree like, though in kind very different from, the hatred of the Romanists towards Wickliffe. Forty-one years after his death, by a decree of the Council of Constance, they cursed his memory, and ordered his body to be thrown far away from any Christian burial. They took his bones out of the grave at

Lutterworth, burnt them to ashes, and cast them into the Swift, a neighbouring brook. "Thus Swift has conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over." Josiah neither hated nor destroyed by halves. His mottoes were "Thorough," "No surrender," "No quarter." Good cause had he for all his fury. For these false priests made young children pass through the fire to Moloch. Moloch was a brazen, hollow figure, with a human body and an ox's head. It was made red hot, and then children were thrown into it, while their screams were drowned with music. Love of God united with love of man to kindle his wrath into a fierce flame. His hearty hatred is probably the reason why he is the only king who turned aside neither to the right hand nor to the left. Holy hatred kept his feet from falling, his eyes from tears, and his soul from death.

Now, have you such a hatred of sin? Notice that Josiah did not hate in others the sins he practised himself. He was not like Alexander the Great of Russia, who used to say, "I reform my country, and am not able to reform myself." Josiah hated sin everywhere, most of all in himself: he hated himself for loving sin. Holy hate is the only healer of hate. He who hates his own sins as he hates the sins of his neighbours, will love his neighbours as he loves himself: the greatest hater of the sin is the greatest lover of the sinner; for he both hates



HANNIBAL'S VOW.

and loves after the manner of Jesus Christ. Thus Josiah had a heart of flesh because he had a heart of iron towards sin. If, then, you know not how to hate, you know not how to love; "for to be mild to the wicked, is to be wicked." Dr. Arnold of Rugby, who was much among boys, used to say, "I have seen boys who love God: commend me to boys who love God *and* hate the devil." He was right; for love without hate makes a mere milksop, and Christ's disciples are to be the *salt*, and not the sugar of society. We need many noble-minded young Josiahs; for we have abominations to be swept away, and idols to be ground into powder. We need boys who will hate all evil as young Hannibal hated Rome. When nine years old, his father, in presence of the whole army, made him lay his hand upon the altar of Baal Ammon, Lord of Light and Life, the same who was worshipped in Judah in Josiah's day. There, as he tells us, he vowed "that, whether his days were few or many, dark or fair, in triumph or trouble, far or near, he would live and die Rome's enemy." Ever after he had but one desire; for he kept his oath, and almost swept Rome from the face of the earth. Like that boy of Carthage, the young Christian is the sworn foe of the ancient and mighty empire of darkness and death. He has gone not to battle, but to war. For him there is neither truce, nor rest, nor furlough till in heaven he exchanges the sword for the victor's crown. But without great hatred no one can become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. xcvi. 10).

I take a very slight step when I proceed to show that—

III. Josiah was a Real Hero.—A hero is one who, in doing duty, scorns great dangers. Nearly all the people were against Josiah's reforms, which put his life in peril; but he pushed boldly forward. Conscience was his king; and he felt that it was not necessary for him to live, but that it was necessary for him to do his work. He had the spirit of Chrysostom, who replied to the threats of the Empress Eudoxia, "I fear nothing but sin." You admire "pluck;" and here it is. He gained the title, before he reached the stature, of a man. While a boy, he was a hero, every inch a hero. With bounding hearts and glowing eyes our boys follow the adventures of their favourite heroes. It is a pity that soldiers are the heroes who often take the strongest hold on boyish imaginations. For the last three thousand years most people have agreed to idolise mere fighters, many of whom have been great heroes without being great men. Why should our boys delight in the garments stained with human blood? Why should they be in love with a glory, which is often the greatest baseness, and the greatest crime? While we should most warmly admire the soldier who risks his life in battle, righteously defending his country, it is high time that we were also admiring equally the heroes of peace and piety, who fight courageously against everything hateful to God, and hurtful to man; the true knights of these latter days, who right the world's wrongs. Are there no

heroes among our missionaries who carry the gospel to the heathen, or among the men and women at home who overthrow the altars of ignorance, intemperance, and godlessness?

It was, no doubt, the Bible that infused his holy heroism into Josiah. You remember how he prized the ancient and perfect copy of the Scriptures that was discovered during his reign. In this he was like our young Edward VI., who has been called the English Josiah. His servant once placed the Bible on a chair to stand upon it. King Edward at once rebuked him, saying, "Respect the Bible." Josiah's love for the Bible would open his soul to all the best influences from the heroic lives of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and Gideon. Thus was developed in him what Dr. Chalmers calls "the expulsive power of a new affection." One day the Doctor was travelling on the top of a stage coach, when the horses took fright and burst away at a gallop. The driver at once began to lash them with his whip. The new fear of the whip expelled, or drove out their former fear, and soon they stopped. That, thought Dr. Chalmers, is the way in which the grace of God drives out one affection by another, and a stronger. Thus the fear of God drove the fear of man out of Josiah's heart, and made him a true hero. And the same grace can drive all mean thoughts out of you, and make you bold in doing the right. You may thus gain more than ever met in the circle of an earthly crown. When visiting gorgeous palaces I have often said to my-

self, "What poor, tarnished, tawdry things are these thrones, and crowns, and robes stiff with cloth of gold, and forests of gold and silver statues! How little the wealth of kings can do for them!" But you may be crowned on earth with God's loving kindness, and wear in heaven a crown that fadeth not away. Do you not desire a place among the heroes of heaven?

IV. Josiah was Missed and Mourned when he died.—He was a hero in war as well as in peace; for, bravely defending his country, he was slain in the thickest of the battle, at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo. "The land mourned for him:" every one mourned as if for an only son. There is a night in the history of Spain, which is known as "the sad night:" and so in the history of Judah, the death of Josiah was "the sad day." The mourning for him was the greatest ever known among the Jews, and passed into a proverb for the bitterest grief. The Lamentations of Jeremiah over him were sung throughout the land for many generations. His name was not "writ in water," but in the hearts of his people. The Rabbis say, "that the memory of him was like costly incense, and sweet as honey in the mouths of all."

A column broken unevenly through the middle often stands over the graves of those who, like Josiah, have died in their prime. It tells touchingly that their life-work was broken off when half done. But few young lives are like that broken pillar. For it is perfect as far

as it goes : it rests upon a firm foundation, and is beautifully rounded in every part. Many young lives are like a shattered column, unhewn from top to bottom. But Josiah's life was like a well chiselled pillar, though snapped in the middle by the rude shock of battle. Hence he was sorely missed and mourned.

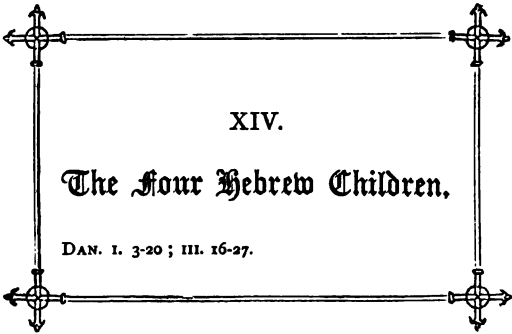
I should be very sorry for you, if you were afraid to ask, "Shall I be missed and mourned when I am gone?" It has been mischievously said that the good children in books always die young. It would be nearer the truth to say, that the young people in novels apparently never die at all. They get a fortune, a castle, and a grand marriage ; but what comes next, we are never told. The novel-writers, as some one has put it, are nearly as careful to shut out the idea of death as the Hollanders are to shut out the sea : they build dykes against the invasions of serious thought about the world to come. It can do you no good to give yourself up to books that undertake to describe life, and yet try to hide death and eternity from you. It can do you no good to fancy that your life on earth will last for ever. Dare to ask, "Will the good miss and mourn me when I die?" How sad if, after your death, people should have to speak of you as a writer speaks of a great man who had lived only for self, "There was many a dry cheek on his funeral day ; and the world was well rid of him, the wretch ;" or as the poet predicts of another,

"And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

How beautiful, on the other hand, is the account of Stephen's funeral, "And devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." We feel shocked by a life that has given no cause for affectionate tears over its close ; and we are pleased with the sorrow which bears witness to the worth of the departed.

May you not live in vain, or die unwept. AMEN.





XIV.

The Four Hebrew Children,

DAN. I. 3-20 ; III. 16-27.





ROCKWOOD and Stetson, two neighbours in New England, used often, as Dr. Todd tells, to argue about the Bible. Rockwood maintained that "it was all made up by priests." One day he had a fine web stretched out on the tenter-hooks to dry : he was a manufacturer. It was stolen, and at last found in Boston. Rockwood was quite sure about the web, but how could he prove that it was his? He asked Stetson's advice. "Why," said Stetson, "take Bible-proof." "What is that?" "Take your web to the tenter-hooks? every hook will come into its own hole; and as there are scores of hooks, the proof will be perfect." Away he went, and at once proved that the web was his. He then asked Stetson, "what did you mean by Bible-proof; If I had as good evidence for the Bible, as for my web, I should never doubt it again." "Well," said Rockwood, "put the Bible on the tenter-hooks. Travel with it over the places where it was written. The Bible is the tourist's best guide-book in Bible Lands. It must have been written on the spot, as your web was made and stretched on your tenter-hooks."

We know a very great deal now about all the Bible Lands, especially about Babylon and Egypt. Fresh discoveries are made in these lands every year, and they prove in a wonderful way the truth of the Bible. Almost every Bible statement about their kings and customs has been confirmed by the monuments that have been dug up. In the British Museum at London you may see what are probably the very bricks made by the Israelites. They are mixed with chopped straw as plasterers' lime is mixed with hair. You may also see pictures of Egyptian taskmasters smiting foreign bondsmen who are making bricks. The Babylon of the monuments lately discovered is the very same as the Babylon of the Bible. The bricks are stamped with the name of Nebuchadnezzar. The three Hebrew children were cast into the furnace, while Daniel was cast into the lions' den. It can be proved from the histories and monuments, that the one form of punishment was used in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and the other in the reign of Darius, who, being a fire-worshipper, would not allow the sacred fire to be defiled with a corpse.

It will be a pleasure to you some day to discover how the blessed web of God's word fits exactly the myriads of tenter-hooks that have been brought to light in the wonderful plains of Egypt and Babylon.

But our lecture follows the four Hebrew boys, who were carried from Jerusalem to Babylon. Daniel was then about fourteen years of age, and the rest were younger. God was punishing their beloved land for its many sins :

His judgments were as whirlwinds to scatter the pestilence of the nation's iniquities. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, remembering Zion. Their great sorrows should stir up in you great sympathy with them. Often you have read their history with a pleasing interest ; and I think you would like to learn the lessons from their lives. They were admirably trained in the three parts of our nature : the body, the mind, and the soul.

I. The Body.—As they were princes they were chosen to be pages of the king of Babylon. They were to be fed for three years with all the royal dainties. Most boys would have blest their good fortune, and taken their fill of all that was going in the palace. But these Jewish boys refused the king's meat and wine, lest they should eat anything forbidden by their religion. So they were fed on pulse and water, the simplest of all sorts of food and drink. And they grew fairer and fatter than all the children in the palace. Like them, you should religiously think about what you eat and drink. If you grow too fond of sweets and dainties, you will injure your body and your soul ; and your life will be small and miserable. The children who are content with plain food become the healthiest and fairest men and women. You will smile with suspicion when I tell you what is the healthiest place in all Scotland, and perhaps in the world. Sir Robert Christison proves that it is Perth Prison. For every man who dies inside it, about ten men of the same age die outside. Many of the prisoners have uneasy

minds, and their lives have been wild, but no matter : they have by necessity what our four boys had by choice,—water, and the plainest food, and splendid health. Their food costs fourpence a day. I was in Richmond, Virginia, shortly after the great war. Nearly the whole city was a mass of blackened ruins. Two things, they said, astonished them during the siege ; first, that they could live on so very little ; and secondly, that fewer people died in days of starvation, than in days of abundance. They made the same discovery during the cotton famine in Lancashire. Plenty, it seems, harms more by its excesses than poverty by its privations. “ Prove thy servants, I beseech thee,” said Daniel, when he preferred the plainest food. Facts all over the world show that Daniel was right. I wish you had the noble spirit of these young exiles, else you will be spoiled children, who cry for hurtful dainties, and lose pleasure for pleasure’s sake. Nothing is plainer to me than that the happiest children and grown-up people are they who are most easily pleased with their food. This becomes a very serious matter with many. Mrs. Schimmelpennick tells that a gentleman who had closely examined many of the large asylums in Europe, discovered that a large number of the inmates were only children who had been over-indulged. A word here about smoking. If a boy wishes to be like others, he will smoke ; if he aims at perfection, he won’t. You will be healthier and happier, more manly and gentlemanly if you don’t learn that fashionable habit. I am not hinting that it is a sin,—nothing of the

sort. But here is a gentleman at a great party. He cannot get his usual after-dinner puff; and he confesses that his misery is complete. I pity the self-made slave.

Your eating and drinking help greatly to form your character; for your diet influences the soul as well as the body. That Turk was much mistaken, who, when about to drink wine, warned his soul to quit the body for a little, lest it should be harmed. How many evils have sprung from luxurious living? It destroyed Rome, after Rome had conquered the whole world. We are all saddened by the bankruptcy of banks and of merchants. The reason is that so few among us have the spirit of these Hebrew children. Many must have costly food and drinks; and they must have fine dishes to hold their fine food; and they must be grander than their rich neighbours; and they must have grand houses for their grand parties; and they must have money, no matter how; and they get into the rapids of extravagance, which hurry them on to bankruptcy; and hundreds of honest people are dragged down by them from plenty to poverty. How safe and noble is the spirit of these boys! They did not despise the body, as monks do: in the spirit of the Bible they honoured it as the handmaid of the soul. They were not as those who live to eat, but who eat to live. By rising superior to the low pleasures of the palace, their souls grew strong and their hearts bold; and so, having done well in the least, they grew fit to do well in the greatest. By keeping under their bodies they escaped being castaways.

II. The Mind.—They were young thinkers, quick-witted, and eager to learn. Well-favoured and without blemish, they had minds to match their bodies ; “for they were skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science” (ver. 17). “God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” (ver. 20). In mind they were ten times better than the royal boys at Babylon.

Your mind is nobler far than your body, and nobler than all the things your eyes behold. The powers of mind are more valued than powers of body by all but savages and stupid people. Few have the candour, though perhaps not a few have a little of the spirit, of a Guinea-trader, who was one evening in company with Pope, the poet, and Sir Godfrey Kneller. He was told by Sir Godfrey that he was in the presence of two of the greatest men of the day. “I don’t know,” he said, “how great you may be, but I don’t like your looks. I have often bought a man much better than both of you together, all bones and muscles, for ten guineas.”

Often the body is the grave of the spirit ; and many value the mind as the minister of the body : they would use it as a sort of chief cook or confectioner for the body. Yet he hardly lives at all, whose mind is not thoughtful. An unthinking boy will grow up to be little better than Nebuchadnezzar, when he lost his understanding, and became as one of the beasts of the field. When the mind is not trained or used, man sinks toward the level of the sheep feeding in the pastures, and of the oxen

fattening in the stall. His history is made up of nothings. For life without thought is death to all but the body. It is the mind that makes the man ; and there is some truth in the words that were painted over the chair of one of my professors—

“On earth there is nothing great but man,
In man there is nothing great but mind.”

With many boys and girls the powers of the mind are roused at first as by a kind of sudden conversion. A book, or a conversation, or a lesson, or even a problem in arithmetic—I have known such cases—deeply stirs the mind and makes the youth conscious of new powers. From that day he tastes the sweets of thinking, and burns with the love of knowledge. William Arnot tells that the first time he read a book of his own accord, he was half-intoxicated with the new-found pleasure. It opened up to him a new world in which there seemed no limit to his enlargement ; and he thought his case like Samuel's, and so said, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” But you may find all these joys in your lessons and lesson-books. I regularly read over the children's school-books, and am delighted with the many fine, interesting things in them. Many of these books are written by the best minds in our country, and may easily prove to you as interesting as any story-books. I still read some of the text-books I had at school and college, and I am as glad to take to them now, as I was to have done with them then. I wonder how I was so blind to

their beauties. Many a writer has used with real affection the words, "my master," as remembering how much he owes to his teacher. Thus also students long ago called their university, "Alma Mater," that is, Bountiful Mother. Their university cherished them into mental health and joy, even as a kind mother cherishes her dear children. Many can thoroughly sympathise with Lord Cockburn thus speaking of one of his professors, "To me his lectures were like the opening of the heavens. I felt that I had a soul. His noble views elevated me into a higher world. They changed my whole nature."

Because the powers of the mind are so great you should be careful to read only healthy books. A girl besought me lately to break the evil spell that was upon her. It was the spell of bad novels. She had begun one, and kept at it for seventeen hours till she had read all its 500 or 600 pages. Her mind, she felt, was weakened, and filled with impure images, and disgusted with daily duties. The writers of such books are among the chief malefactors in our day; for their works eat the heart out of thousands, and poison their whole life. Let your rule be, no books or good books. Do with books what a great painter did with paintings. He never looked at a bad picture if he could help it, lest his brush should catch a taint from it. If the books of your boyhood are bad, you will regret the reading of them as long as you live. I am sure that their keen thirst for knowledge greatly helped to keep the Hebrew boys from shameful sins, and to ennoble their lives. I do not wonder that some of

our young men give themselves to dogs, and horses, and theatres, and low company. Their minds are dead, while their bodies are all alive. They take to mean things, because they are strangers to the refining pleasures of the intellect. I have seen such men in old age, and how wretched they were ! They were shut out from their old pleasures, and they could not enter the beautiful and glorious world which thought opens up to us ; and so they sat idly at the fireside, pining away in a famine of the mind, which would have been complete but for the newspapers.

Let these children also teach you that the best knowledge is the knowledge of the best things, the things of the soul, of God, and of heaven. "Know thyself." We are all like the king of Babylon. Something is wrong with us, and we are troubled with strange visions ; but we have forgotten the dream, and how shall we get the interpretation thereof? Sin has brought us to this pass. But we may know the deep and secret things that trouble the soul, though the wise men of the world cannot show them unto us. For there is One who can reveal these secrets unto us, for with Him is the wisdom of heaven ; and He can show us what shall come to pass. Oh, it is a poor thing to know much, and yet know nothing about our souls and our Saviour. Your mind is rightly trained only when it leads to the training of—

III. The Soul.—As the mind is nobler than the body, so the soul is nobler than the mind. The soul is

the man, the mind is the soul's servant, and the body is the servant's servant. I have seen a curious calculation : the word "heart" is named 800 times in the Bible, the word "soul" 440 times, and the word head only 80 times. "Heart" and "soul" both mean man's spiritual nature. As thought is the life of the mind, so true Christian life is the grandeur of the soul. Their state of body and mind was most helpful to their soul. Their minds were not dulled by over-feeding, nor were their souls clogged with stupid minds. Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold fully 90 feet high, and commanded all to worship it. In these days an Eastern monarch had almost the power of a god, with the temper of a spoiled child. Whoever displeased him was cut in pieces, and his house made a dunghill. The three children stoutly refused to worship the golden god (Daniel was probably out of Babylon at the time). Picture the three there. How weak ! Why, the palace of the king they offended was twice the size of Jerusalem, and the area of his city was at least five times the area of London ; and they stood against all the power within its walls. They had other reasons besides their fears for doing the bidding of the king. Had he not been very kind to them ? Were they not rising young men who might have great power for good by-and-bye ? Then they had to face the most terrible form of death. Look at that furnace seven times heated. The idea of it makes our flesh creep with horror. There they stand : they must turn or burn. They make no boast ; they say

very little ; they show no sign of fear. Though mere boys, they are the champions of Heaven among the children of earth. They fear neither the fury of the mob, nor of the king, nor of the flaming furnace. They were like Luther when he said to the Emperor, " Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." These boys did a very great thing. I am not sure that man or boy ever did anything greater. Lo, they are cast into the furnace ! The men who cast them in are killed by the heat, but they are unhurt. Only their bands are burnt. And a glorious Being is with them. It is the Son of Man. They come forth unhurt, as Daniel came out of the lions' den.

We wonder at their holy lives in such a wicked palace, and at their perfect boldness. The poets speak of a river that preserves the sweetness of its waters amid the bitterness of the sea, and of an animal that lives in the midst of the fire ; and such like were their lives. There is a little insect that gathers around itself a viewless coat of air, and goes down clad in it to the bottom of the sea. The little diver moves about at its ease, unhurt amid the stagnant waters. The grace of God wove such a garment of Heaven's air around these children, that they passed unhurt through the poisoned atmosphere of Babylon. It made them the children of Heaven, and gave them a nobility of nature more than nature can give. David says, " Great peace have they who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend (that is, *hurt*) them." Where is the fire that can harm them ? The fire of hell cannot reach them ;

the fire of earth cannot destroy them; the fire of Heaven gladdens them. Pray that you may be like them and then the Son of Man shall lead you through the furnace to the great reward prepared for his faithful followers.



XV.

The Child Jesus.

LUKE II. 40-52; EPH. V. 1 and 2.





I AM to speak to you to-day about the child Jesus, and the children of God. We like to treasure up everything we can gather about the childhood of great men. In the biographies you read, the most charming pages are those which record the sayings and doings of youths who have become famous. Yet the Bible tells us very little about the childhood of Jesus. Luke is the only historian of His childhood and boyhood ; and there is only one verse that gives us any insight into His character up to His twelfth year. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon him" (ii. 40). Alongside of it we may place the 52nd verse : "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Grant, O God, that we may not think amiss of Thy Holy Child. May we draw near unto Him in the spirit of the wise men of the east, when they offered Him their homage and their best gifts. May we present unto Him the gold of our best thoughts, and the frankincense and myrrh of our grateful love.

It is made very plain that Jesus was a real child, and that He was very like other children in all things but sin. He was no unearthly child without childhood. His cradle-life was very like yours. I believe that He thought as a child, and spake as a child, and played as a child. We are told very minutely that He grew as children usually grow. Mary knew that He was the promised Messiah, and the child of hope for all nations; but she kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. The villagers of Nazareth had not noticed anything very astonishing in the early days of Christ, for His miracles greatly surprised them. "Is not this the carpenter?" they asked. Their surprise shows that His outward life among them up to that time had been quiet and ordinary. Nathanael lived within two hours' walk of Nazareth, and had, no doubt, been often there, as he made his rounds when selling his fish. He apparently knew "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John i. 45); but he had not heard of anything remarkable about Him till Philip declared Him to be the Messiah. We may believe that we are told nothing more about His childhood because there was nothing remarkable to tell. Yet people afterwards invented all sorts of fables about the wonders of His boyhood. They made a great mistake. For the less wonderful, the more real His childhood is to us, and the silence of the Gospels teaches us great lessons. It teaches us for one thing that He is very man. His mind grew along with His body; He "increased in wisdom and stature." He passed through all the stages in the little

history of an infant. The mother broods over her infant; she somehow reaches through eye and ear the hidden springs of life in the little soul, and so becomes the parent of his mind as well as of his body. After two or three weeks she is rewarded with its smile of heavenly sweetness. Such a first waking smile did the mother receive from the child Jesus. And He had His first word. Of all the strides in a child's growth, that is, to my thinking, the most wonderful and mighty. One often wishes to know how a child learns to speak, but the matter is too high for us. All we can do is to watch the gentle progress from noise to speech without sense, and then to speech with sense. Other smiles followed the child Christ's first smile, and other words His first word; and so His mind grew little by little, as dawn grows out of darkness into glorious day. And he grew in "wisdom," which is better far than learning or knowledge. "An ounce of wisdom," the proverb says, "is worth a ton of learning." Learning has often left men fools; but wisdom teaches us to live well, and is the best growth of the mind. Thus "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit." His human nature, like yours, had these three parts: body, mind, and spirit. The body connects us with the earth, which is kindred dust; the mind or soul connects us with men; and the spirit connects us with God. Jesus grew in every part, and with all kinds of growth. He grew up "as a tender plant," like a beautiful young tree in your garden, growing upward, downward, and all round. All in Him was harmonious. Now, such is true growth. Some

children, however, are content to grow in body without growing in mind. But,

“ It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make men better be.”

The child is not all born till the mind is born and grows. Then, some children grow in body and mind, while they wax weak in spirit from want of wisdom. But they who grow truly will so grow in their noblest parts, that they shall feel age more by the strength of the soul than by the weakness of the body. Your spirit, dwelt in by the Spirit of God, should rule over mind and body. It should be like the captain in a well-ordered ship, and all the parts and passions of your nature should be as a well-trained and obedient crew.

The teachers of the child Jesus were Nature, His daily work, the synagogue, His home, and His Bible. His parables prove that He was a lover of nature, and that He closely observed all the objects around Him, and linked them on to His great thoughts. The whole of this glorious world should be a school to you also. Heaven and earth are a splendid book, which is open to all. You may find a lesson and a joy in everything. Then He loved His home, for from Heaven He said to Saul of Tarsus, “I am Jesus of Nazareth.” None but a lover of his home would have taken such a name. He had also all the discipline of daily work, which would probably begin when He was very young. We also

know that He was subject unto His parents, and that He regularly attended the synagogue; and all His words show that His mind was steeped in every part of the Old Testament. Your educators are very like His. Pray that you may use them in the same spirit.

Above all things He was holy. "The grace of God was upon Him," as the sunshine is upon you at mid-day; as the morning dew is upon the flower, filling its cup. Yet His childhood was not gloomy, awful, or unearthly; for "He increased in favour with God and man!" His childhood was sweet and gentle. And it was very natural; for it was a return to our true and first nature before sin had poisoned it. Hence the child Jesus was what we call "a universal favourite," and the magic of goodness made Him so. Everybody liked to be near Him, to see His smile, to hear His voice, and to watch His ways. It is sin that makes children unlovely; and it is holiness that makes them divinely beautiful. It was so in Nazareth; and it is so here to-day as much as ever. All own that grace makes the young *graceful*, that is, beautiful with the finest beauty.

As Pilate said, "Behold the man," I say to you, "Behold the child." How delightful is the gospel of the Infancy! Let us often go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass. God's way of getting at the heart of children is by the Babe of Bethlehem. The second Adam, unlike the first Adam, became a child for you children, and for your salvation. As He was rocked on Mary's knee, and lulled to sleep in Mary's

bosom, you may the more easily believe that He will pity your simplicity, and suffer you to come to Him. As the magnet draws the particles, so His childhood should draw the hearts of children to Him. Again I say, "Behold the child." We do not bring Jesus before you as Roman Catholics do in their pictures, where He appears as a little child in Mary's arms, with a halo around His head. They make Him little, that they may make her great. While we rejoice that He was a child, we think of Him as now the *man* Christ Jesus, seated on the throne of glory in heaven. Let this ever be your rejoicing, that unto us a child has been born in the city of David. Let your hearts often visit the Babe in the manger. Let your ear be attentive to the words of the angel, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people!" All people! Are you not one of them? Join then the heavenly choir in their song of "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Turn now to Ephesians v. 1 and 2, where you learn how you may imitate the child Jesus. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Jesus became a child on earth, that we might become children of Heaven. He became human that He might make us divine. A child must not become a man before he can be a Christian, but a man must become a child in spirit. The verse I have given you

shows how this is. It means, "be ye imitators of God as children dearly beloved." Men and women are made what they are by imitation: all but a very few, who are called geniuses, and who strike out new paths of their own. It is usually admiration of individuals that makes great men. This law of imitation has most power among children. They learn to live as they learn to write—by copying. The genius of imitation is perfect in them. Of a child the poet says,—

"As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation."

Among children, they imitate most who are "dear children," or children dearly beloved. The love of father and mother does for their hearts what the photographer's chemicals do for his plates—softens them and prepares them for receiving the image of their parents. It is one of the luxuries or "treats" of home-life to watch how the child follows the father or mother. In a thousand of its odd, laughable, little ways the child copies the parents. What a frightful thing that any dearly beloved child should not be an imitator of the father! Now Paul says, you are God's child, and you are dearly beloved. From love to you He gave up His own and only Son to the death. What a burning shame, what a monstrous sin, if you, a child so deeply loved, do not strive to be like your Father in heaven! Some wish you to be hero-worshippers. They wish you to pick out great men or women and say, "Now here is my model: I will try

to be like them." That is a very poor religion. Many tell you that you must be neighbourly, or like the rest. But many boys and girls are ruined because they cannot dare to be unlike those around them. How glorious ! how grand is the Christian life ! Listen not to those who bid you be manly in the worldly sense of the word : it is beneath you to be manly as many men go. The best of men are but men at the best, and retain some weakness you should shun. Be godly, that is god-like ; or, if you will be manly, take care in choosing your man : be a follower of the one true man the world has yet seen, the Child, the Man Christ Jesus. I wish I could put this great idea into one young mind.

I fancy you saying, "Tell me plainly how I can be like God. I am a weak, sinful creature." Well, you cannot be like Him in His infinite power, wisdom, and holiness ; but in one thing you can be like Him, and that is His love. And so our text runs, "and walk in love." To walk in love, is to be a child of God. To walk,—how simple ! It is not tugging and straining at a desperate task, but walking. My body, men of science tell me, is made up of millions of little bodies, each of which has a life of its own ; but they all sweetly agree to obey my one will. My life is made up of millions of little acts, and all are in the same way to be under holy love. And you are to "*walk* in love." As the fish moves in the water, and is never out of it, as the eagle soars in the heavens, so your soul is to live, and move, and have its being in God's love to you. When you leave this

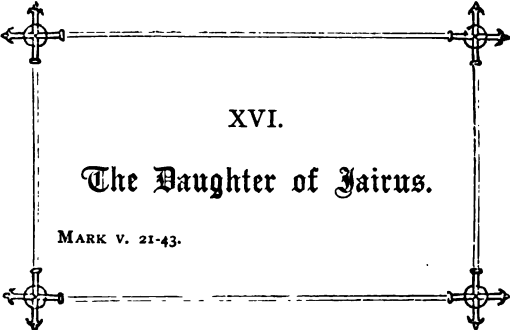
church your body is bathed in the sunshine, and so your soul is to bathe itself in the light of the Sun behind the sun.

But you may here say, "I wish I saw some one walking in love in this way. Can you not point me to some dear child of God who lived a life like mine—who lived as a child and a boy." Our text meets and satisfies your wish. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Christ the babe of Bethlehem, Christ the child of Mary, Christ the boy in the carpenter's shop, Christ who died for our sins, had the very same spirit from first to last: He wholly gave Himself up to holy love. He "hath given Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God"; and He is thus both our Priest and our Example. To be in Christ, is perfect salvation; to be like Christ, is perfect holiness; and to be with Christ, is perfect joy. The other week Dr. Harper, one of the oldest professors of divinity in our country, lay a-dying. He was asked if he had a message for his students. "Tell them all," he replied, "to follow Christ." If you follow Christ, you will walk in child-like love to the Father. You will think much about all His love to you, and you will love Him in return, and your love will shape itself into a cheerful obedience of all His commandments. Your soul will turn to God as the hart turns to the water brooks to be refreshed; not as the hart moves along when jaded, and driven on by the hounds.

And you will love all who love the Lord. You will walk among them in the spirit of Christ who gave His

life for them. Thus yours will be a lowly, ministering love to all His followers. You will not fail to give the cup of cold water to His disciples for His sake. Christian charity will not be with you a forgotten duty.

And you will also cherish Christ-like love for those who have erred and gone out of the way. Some touch of divine pity will prove you to have the mind of Him who came to seek and save the lost. The true mission spirit will stir up in you a generous sorrow for the heathen at home and abroad. You will have full sympathy with Christ in His offers of mercy to all mankind. You will have great joy in believing a Gospel which is to be preached to every creature under heaven. Thus by your love of God, and your love of the brethren, and your love of all men, you will be a follower of God, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. Yours will be that life of holy love which is our chief end and joy. How beautiful and touching are the words that allure us to it ! Just listen to them, " And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children : and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."



XVI.

The Daughter of Jairus.

MARK V. 21-43.





DURING my holidays I visited the chief church in Copenhagen. It is adorned with the famous statues of Thorwaldsen. Upon entering we saw on the walls near the door "the acts of mercy" in marble. Then on each side we found six colossal statues of the apostles. We passed from one to another of them, and came to a kneeling angel, holding a shell filled with the water of baptism. Behind it stood the communion table. We were now in the rounded end of the church, and in the centre we stood face to face with the image of the risen Saviour, whose pierced hands were uplifted as blessing men, and whose presence seemed to fill the whole building. The walls around were covered with sculptures of Calvary. In the Bible, as in that church, we find many sacred things, but the chief place is given to the crucified and risen Saviour, who stands forth in the centre, filling every eye, and advance beyond whom there is none.

The simple stories in the Gospels help us greatly to

know Jesus Christ. I am not sure that any of them is more interesting than the story of Jairus' daughter. She was about twelve years of age, his only daughter, and perhaps his only child: to him she was the fairest of all flesh; and she was dead. Melted in grief, he flung himself at Jesus' feet. Jesus at once started for Jairus' home. On the way a sick woman touched His garment, and He healed her. A great crowd followed Him, but He allowed only three of His disciples to go into the room, and see His miracle of mercy. Grant, O our God, that we may be like these favoured three. May we not be like the rude crowd, who cared only for the loaves and fishes, but had no love for the Saviour. Let us be present in spirit, and see as with our own eyes the wonders of His love.

This story shows us—

- I. The Heart of Jesus.*
- II. The Hand of Jesus.*
- III. The Healing of Jesus.*

You can easily carry the truth which I put up for you into these three little bundles.

I. The Heart of Jesus is here laid open to us. Many are anxious to find out what the face of Jesus was like, but our concern shall be to know how His heart feels towards us. I might say that if you lay your hand upon any page in the Gospels, you will feel the throbbings

of a heart full of wonderful pity for all sinners and sufferers. All His sayings and doings, His death and resurrection, reveal a loving kindness to which there are no bounds. As the great ocean opens its bosom to receive all the rivers, so Christ's bosom is open for all the sorrows of men. How often you read of Christ's compassion. You have stood perhaps by the bedside of your little sister dying in pain. You would have died for her, could that have been. The feeling in your heart was so strong as to make your blood flow in a different way: your ears tingled; your voice had a different sound; your whole body thrilled strangely. The feeling in your heart moved your flesh and blood. And learned men tell us that, as the word shows, Christ's compassion was like that. No matter what services a helper may give us, we are never satisfied unless we are sure of his love. Of all England's kings, William III. probably best deserved the title of the Saviour and Deliverer of the country; yet of all England's kings he was the most unpopular, for it was known that his heart was not with our nation. But in the Saviour of our souls there is everything that can bind us to Him. Both His services and His compassion are infinite. Notice also that His mercy is called forth by our misery. Jairus' loss drew out Christ's love. By the way He must heal a poor woman. He hurries on, and soon brings Jairus' daughter back to life. And then He heals two blind men. And such was His life on earth. There is nothing you need so much as to believe in this love of Christ with all your

heart, and strength, and soul, and mind. Turn to Him as the great Lover of your soul. It is not enough to believe in His love to others : you must believe in His love to you. I have read a good story about a half-witted man, who was teased by some wild young fellows. "And so you have come to Christ," they said. "Yes," he replied. "And what was He like when you saw Him?" "The very same as He was *yon* day." "What day do you mean?" his tormentors asked. "Yon day," he replied, "when He said to the sick man, 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee!'" The heart of Jesus to you is the very same as it was *yon* day in the home of Jairus. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Surely heaven is not the place to lessen His love. We know that His compassion for sinners and sufferers is the same now as it was in the days of His flesh. As He has in heaven the same heart to you which He had when on earth, see that you have on earth the heart to Him which you hope to have in heaven.

This simple truth should be as clear to your mind, and as warming to your heart, as the summer's noonday sun. When we forget it, the soul is like a ship in a Newfoundland fog. The dark fog-bank breaks off at once, as if sliced through with a knife ; and the sailors at a single bound dash out of night into day. And the chilled, fearful soul often passes as perfectly into God's sunshine, the moment it believes the redeeming love of Christ. For we often mistake Christ, and wrong Him. We are like the Fiji Islanders, who used to regard the English as

their foes. When they saw our vessels, they fled into their gloomiest thickets, and would not return, though our sailors followed them with every token of good will. They fled from us because they did not know us; but when they came to know us, they found out that we were their best friends, and requested that they too might be under our Queen. If you flee from Christ and His service, I know the reason: you have wrong thoughts about it and Him. If you knew His heart, you would flee to Him, and take Him as your Saviour and King. The other evening I was asked to see a poor dying man. "I have been a very wild living man," he said: "when I lay down here I thought that there was nothing for me but to turn my face to the wall, and die in despair. But I took a deep thought about myself, and I have been reading my Bible, and thinking over what I learnt when a boy." Leaning over his bed, and shaking his head very emphatically, he said, "I think there's a chance for me yet." Ah, he was getting a glimpse of the heart of Jesus, and his fears were yielding to faith. "You are quite right," I said, "there is more than a chance, there is a perfect certainty for you if you take God's own way." I took his Bible, and marked some twenty verses that exactly suited his case, and asked him to think over them prayerfully. The last time I saw him, he said, "Come away. I'm done. I'm a dying man, but I see there's a great chance for me now. The fact is, I'm sure He won't cast me out, for He says so Himself."

Let your eye now rest on—

II. The Hand of Jesus.—It touches the sick and dead: it is full of power. With a mere wish, with a word at a distance, He could have healed this girl; but it was usually His way to touch those He healed. Hence the kings who claimed to be the Lord's Anointed, used to touch the sick, and were supposed to heal them. Christ touched the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf. He touched the children, laying His hands upon them. He was always touching sick souls into health, and dead souls into life. He touched even the lepers, whom others would scarcely have touched with a pair of tongs. It seems that He greatly loved to touch all sorts of people. He did more than touch this girl: He firmly grasped her with His warm human hand; and she arose. He became a man, our kinsman and elder brother, that He might be near enough to touch us fully, and to touch us always. Because He is of our kind, we may be sure that He is kind to us. As you read "the sweet story of old," do you wish that you had seen Jesus in the flesh, and that His hand had been laid on your head? Such wishes are needless, for you may still receive His touch, and have a share in His love. I trust that He is more to you than a name, or a shadow. The other evening I visited a house in which there were a room and kitchen. I was shown into the room, the door of which was open, and faced the kitchen door, which was also open. I saw three moving pictures on the kitchen wall opposite the blazing fire. The shadows on the wall made me glad, for they were a proof that the people I was anxious to

see were at home ; but I was not content till I had seen them face to face, and grasped their warm hands, and given them my errand. How often, I thought, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are to us like the quivering shadows on the wall ! They are not real living Beings to us. May you fully believe that Christ lives in heaven, and that He can touch you on earth.

“ Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright reality ;
More present to faith's vision keen
Than every earthly object seen :
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than ev'n the closest earthly tie.”

But while Christ touches you, you should also touch Christ. We must take together the pair of miracles recorded in this passage. One woman in the crowd touched the hem of Christ's garment. Now we are all in the crowd around Christ ; but how many press towards Him and touch Him as she did ? When Charles II. was touching the sick, the throng to reach him was once such, that six or seven people were trampled to death. Would that there were such an eagerness to receive healing from Christ. For He is near to touch and be touched. He has let down His garment within your reach. As plague-stricken people are so full of the plague that their very clothes convey the deadly poison to their neighbours, so Christ's garments are saturated with healing power. His word, His house, His day, are a part of His garment. By touching what is His you

may touch Him. Perhaps you know how Benjamin Franklin and his little boy discovered electricity. They had a kite soaring in the clouds, and they put their naked fingers to the string, and drew down a spark. Ah, God's fire is in heaven ; but by His word and prayer, the spark may be brought down. Old and young, father and son, may catch it, and feel its glow within them. But I will show you plainly what I mean. I one day gave out the hymn, " My faith looks up to Thee." A girl of the same age as Jairus' daughter, and very fond of music, began to sing it. It somehow struck her. By the music she reached the meaning ; by the song her soul rose to the sense ; and by the song and sense she rose to the Saviour, and touched Him : it appears that she then looked and lived. I heard a missionary tell that one day when a boy he was humming over a verse his mother had taught him, " Just as I am without one plea : "—" Lo ! What ! May I come just as I am ? Then why don't I ? " he said to himself. He touched, and was touched by, the divine hand ; and a virtue then entered into him which has remained to this hour.

Turn we now to—

III. The Healing of Jesus.—This girl must have had strange feelings when her soul returned to the body it had recently forsaken. We are not told that she was startled or frightened. Perhaps she could say about her new life what Dr. Malan of Geneva said about his, " I was awakened as a mother awakens her child with a kiss."



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For our Saviour took her by the hand, and said, "Talitha cumi." Each morning her mother used to awake her by taking her hand, and saying with a kiss, "Talitha cumi," which means, my little lamb, or my lammie, rise. Even thus, with all the power of God and with gentleness more than a mother's, Christ by touch and voice awoke the girl, and welcomed her back to life. Jesus has more than a touch, a tear, and a kind word to give to our misery. His name declares the work to which He gave Himself on earth, and gives Himself still in heaven : Jesus means Healer. Nor is He like the healers in our hospitals, who must sometimes leave the healed to starve and to find hunger as cruel as disease. Christ did not heal and then leave this girl ; He helped her up, and got her food. He preserves and strengthens for ever the life He gives to the soul.

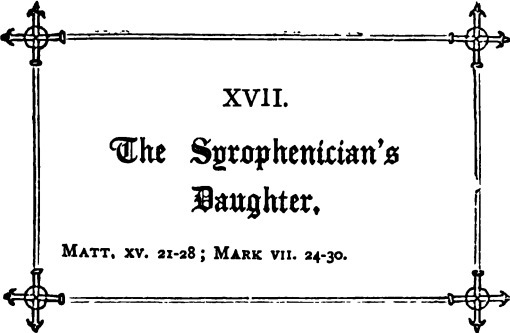
About the after-history of this girl we are told nothing. But we are sure that she loved her Healer while she had being. Her first love,—pure, and sweet, and warm—would be fed with delight, and holy wonder, and growing knowledge, just as the flame of the lamp is fed with fresh oil. Only a monster with a heart of stone or iron could have been ungrateful to such a Friend. We readily believe that she was made Christ's by every tie of gratitude. And so our religion is a religion of gratitude for the greatest and freest favours. It is therefore a religion of love and joy. The worshipper in the Greek church crosses his breast, his forehead, and his arms, meaning thereby that he offers to God his affections, his

thoughts, and his actions. In some Roman Catholic churches abroad you may see nearly a cart-load of votive offerings, as they are called. These are offerings of gratitude to the Virgin Mary, who, as the poor people fancy, has healed them. The commonest offering is a heart,—sometimes made of gold or silver—with a flame atop. We should cherish towards Christ the reality of which these things are the poor signs. This grateful love will make you like Christ in heart, in hand, and in healing; for love must make you like your Beloved. It will give you some of His compassion for all who are in sin and sorrow. For He teaches all His how to love: He is the heart of their hearts. And the love of Christ will constrain you to have a hand like His, a hand stretched out to the helpless. You will not idly fold your hand in your bosom, and stand in the crowd of selfish loungers in the world's market-place. An Educated Indian, visiting England lately, said, "In England I saw the hand, but not the heart of Christ." He meant that Christian workers had not, as he fancied, the meek and lowly spirit of their Master. The law of Christ's kingdom is, first the heart, and then the hand; for the hand should always be the agent of the heart. The true Christian prays for both the heart and hand of Christ, and longs to be like Him also in healing power. He even hopes to be a healer after the Great Healer, Whose way often is to touch the dead through His living disciples. If we are among Christ's healed ones, we shall be very sorry that so many are diseased and dead in soul; and, feeling that

we can do nothing ourselves, we shall, like Jairus, pray Christ to come and heal them. O Thou great Physician, make our souls whole, and heal the souls of those who are dear unto us. And do thou fill our hearts with generous gratitude to Thee, and make us like Thyself. And Thine shall be all the glory for ever and ever. Amen.







XVII.

**The Syrophenician's
Daughter,**

MATT. XV. 21-28 ; MARK VII. 24-30.





CAPTAIN COOK found in the South Seas some uninhabited islands, waving with the fruits and flowers peculiar to Europe. No human hand had planted the seeds in that soil. How, then, were they there? A boy in one of our valleys is amusing himself with seeds. A few of them fall from his hand into the tiny stream at his cottage door: they are carried down to the river, which floats them out to the sea. They are drifted about over thousands of miles, and at last cast up on the shore of a South Sea island. A bird picks them up, and flies to its nest; but, scared by a hawk, lets them drop. They are covered with the leaves of the forest till spring calls them forth. By and by the wind shakes out the ripe seed, and carries it abroad. Again it falls into the kindly bosom of the earth, and again spring draws it forth. Thus, we may suppose, the deserted island is soon clothed with an European harvest. And thus the seed of God's word is often scattered, we cannot tell how, and carried far and wide, like thistle-down, on the wings of

the wind. How did that seed find a home in the heart of this mother, who, before she saw Christ, had greater faith than He had found in Israel? For she was of Canaan's cursed race, and had been brought up in one of the darkest corners of heathendom. She is called "a Greek," but that word tells not her race, but her religion; just as a poor woman, by birth a Scot, once said to me, "By the help of God, I'm a Roman." Yet this Syrophenician worshipped Christ as the Son of David, the Saviour of sinners, and the only Healer of the sick. Our missionaries sometimes find like glad surprises among the heathen. They have discovered men and women, who had never heard the name of Christ, who were yet walking in the fear of God, and doing righteousness, and who were ready at once to welcome the good news of salvation. Having gone in the right direction as far as they could, they were standing on the furthest point of discovered truth and duty, and were stretching out their hands to God in their longing for more light. Study with me—

- I. This Girl.*
- II. Her Mother.*
- III. Her Saviour.*
- IV. Her Cure.*

I. The Girl was "grievously vexed with a devil." Her case was very sad and strange. What misery this

interesting and engaging girl had in the plague of her soul! You should know that the diseases Christ healed were parables and pictures of the diseases of our souls. In the old world the human soul was often represented on canvas or in marble as a young girl with wings, but torn and bound by evil spirits. Behold in this poor girl what sin does in the soul it enslaves. For where sin is, there is Satan, our cruel enemy. He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. It is he who tempts you to lie, and steal, and use bad words, and disobey your parents. Every sin makes you more than ever his slave. And how awful is his power over the sinning soul: it is just like his power over this girl's body! I cannot explain it: it is far too deep and dark; but we may see it every day in the servants of sin. Notice also Satan's cruelty. He is the worst of tyrants and tormentors, and in the end vexes the soul as grievously as he vexed this writhing girl. Nor can any human power free you from his grasp. All the gods, helpers, and physicians in Tyre and Sidon could not set this girl free. For anything man's skill could do, she was beyond all hope and remedy. A minister once gave out the hymn,

"How wretched was our former state,
When slaves to Satan's sway."

He made a great impression by saying that some of his hearers should read it,

"How wretched is our present state,
As slaves to Satan's sway."

The sun shines on no sadder sight than a young soul that is the willing slave of Satan. Well may the Church of Christ weep over that soul, as the Syrophenician mother wept over her darling child, whom Satan was claiming as his slave.

With all the sympathy due to great sorrows, fix your eye now upon—

II. The Girl's Mother.—She was probably a widow, as no mention is made of the girl's father. The girl would thus be "all the world" to the mother. On earth there is no stronger love than a mother's for her suffering child. When you visit a mother nursing her sick child, you perceive a something in the very air that reaches your heart, as if through the pores of the skin. The atmosphere of the room is infected with the mother's affection, so pervading is it. You feel the glow of intense love in the mother's bosom as much as you feel the glow of the fire in the grate. This mother made all her girl's grief her own; and her prayer was, "Have mercy on *me*, O Lord; help me." Her sorrow bettered what was best in her, and lifted her nearer God. Her soul was like the harp, which does not give out its sweetest music till its strings are strained. I wonder how she was drawn to Christ with such faith and hope, for all the Rabbis scorned Gentile women. How did she come to believe that she was safe with this one Jewish teacher? It is an interesting fact that, so far as we know, no woman ever opposed Christ in the days of

His flesh. Some graceless women oppose Him in our day in public lectures ; but that is a new horror, and a modern monstrosity. No dislike was shown to Him even by Herod's wife, or Pilate's. I have read that children always drew back from the eagle-like, serpent-like eye of Voltaire. He had no love for them, and somehow they all knew it, and shrank back from him as a young bird flees from a hawk seen for the first time. In some such instinctive way children and women felt in the presence of Christ as they felt in the presence of no other being. They knew for certain that He respected and loved them, just as a blind man knows a flower by its perfume. If you can tell me how the particles of steel move to the magnet, how the new-born lamb turns to the mother's milk, how the swallows wing their way to the sunny south, then I can tell you how this mother was drawn by a secret influence to Jesus Christ. No wonder that she was allured to Him, for He was the Maker of home, the Lover of children, the Exalter of woman, and the Friend of all mankind. Very likely she had many doubts and fears ; yet, what could she do but go to Him ? She was like a humble Christian of whom Dr. Krummacher tells. He sprang after his boy who had fallen into the swollen flood of the river Wupper, and as he sprang he cried, "O Lord, teach me how to swim." He swam well, though he had never tried it before, and soon—nobody could tell how—father and child, all breathless and dripping, stood on the bank. So often they are wisest who are not wise at all ; for it is God's

way out of the mouth of babes to ordain strength, that He may still the enemy and the avenger. This poor mother drew her skill and eloquence not from books, but fresh from the heart. If we had stronger desires, we should soon dash through all our difficulties as she did. I saw in our city lately a beautiful picture called "The Pool of Bethesda." An old, haggard Pharisee is looking down into the pool. He thinks only of the outward means, and prays not for God's effectual blessing. By his side stands a mother, who has the same spirit of faith as this girl's mother. She has come from afar: hers is a foreign, not a Jewish face. Her child, who is "sick unto death," leans on her breast. Her eyes are uplifted in prayer; her face beams with hope; she is waiting eagerly for the coming angel, and is ready to tear in an instant the child's feeble arms from her neck and plunge it into the healing waters. Those who love you best bear you upon their hearts as that mother bore her sick child. They cannot change your hearts; they cannot loosen the hold Satan has of your soul; but they can bring you, their spiritual sick, to the healing fountain, and to the Giver of Life. Such is the love of the true mother-church for her unconverted children.

We now proceed to—

III. The Girl's Saviour.—We are surprised at first that Jesus did not hear her on the spot, for He was very ready to be moved by such cases. For once the disciples seemed kinder than the Master: they wished

Him to grant the mother's request there and then. But He was wiser and more merciful than they, and therefore He delayed. God's delays are always full of meaning. By this delay Christ taught her and us some great truths, and prepared her for greater blessings than she could have received at an earlier period. He brought out her faith and humility, and taught all men that the feast of His love is for Gentile and Jew alike. Some old writers thus quaintly explain the case, "Christ's love is wise. There is an art in His strange delays, which make us love-sick. We cheapen what is easily got, and under-rate anything that is at our elbow ; but delays heighten and raise the market value of Christ's blessings. He wishes to make our faith stronger, and His trials are for the triumph of our faith. He did as we do when we hold toys dangling before our children, that we may make them desire and enjoy them more. He acts as we do with musicians at the door ; for when they please us, we do not give them their penny at once, that we may hear their music longer." The mother of this girl was like Monica, the mother of Augustine. She prayed that her godless boy might not go to Rome, for she feared that Rome would be his ruin. God did not grant that request, because He had something better in store for her. Augustine went to Rome and was converted there. He thus explains God's apparent refusal of her prayer, "O God, thou gavest her not what she asked then, that thou mightest give her what she asked always." We now see the reason why Christ seemed,

but only seemed, to say no to this distressed mother. His delay was no denial. He never says no to the sincere seeker, though He often does not say yes in the way, and at the time we expected. What might appear cruelty, was all kindness. It gave Him the opportunity of praising and increasing her faith. For Christ wishes us to have strong faith in Him. He loves to see us trust Him wholly. This woman's faith grew greater by its trials. It was like the water-lily which lives and thrives amid storms ; for though its head is tossed with wind and wave, its roots are sheltered deep in the earth. When Christ said that it was not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs, she was willing to be a dog, willing to be anything, if she could only get some of the crumbs under the table. She knew the table to be so rich that it held enough for the children and the dogs. She knew His grace to be so great that even a crumb of it would serve her turn. She did not over-estimate His compassion, for who can set any bounds to His mercy towards the miserable? Between your soul and all your fears, between your soul and hell, place our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who lived on earth for us, who died on the cross for our sins, who rose from the grave, and who sits as a Prince and a Saviour at God's right hand. Will you perish, dare you perish, when you may claim the help of such a Saviour? It remains for us now to consider,

IV. The Cure.—Look on the girl before she was

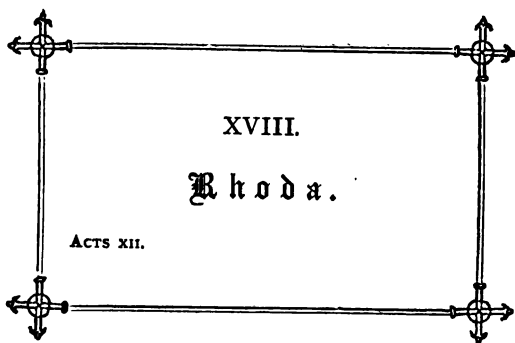
healed, "grievously vexed with a devil," having "an unclean spirit," a perfect picture of wretchedness ; such is the soul in sin. Look on the girl after Christ had done His work in her. She lies upon the bed in peace, and her gratitude overflows. Such is the soul in a state of grace. This girl's cure was perfect : she was "made whole." To be whole, and to be holy, mean the same thing ; the two words come from the same root. Christ's salvation brings true health to the soul.

Then Christ cured her though she was at a distance from Him. You may think that He is far away from you in heaven, and that He cannot reach you here on earth. That were a great mistake ; for this case proves that distance makes no difference to Him. She knew the exact time of her cure : she could not help knowing "that very hour." But Christ has healed many who could not give day and date. Dr. Livingstone tells that he once asked a chief how old he was. All the people around him burst into loud laughter. "The idea," they said, "of a man remembering when he was born !" But they knew that they had been born, though they knew not when. If you have the true signs of the new birth, never trouble yourself about anything else. For some have had their second birth so early or so gently, that they cannot remember it any more than they can remember their first birth.

Christ, I have told you, kept this woman waiting for her sake, and for ours. He had to teach a glorious truth which people were then very slow to learn. When your

teachers wish you to learn some hard lesson, they give much time to it, impress upon you each of its parts, and repeat it again and again. And thus the great Teacher taught her and us that the free grace of God is for all, and for all alike. The Jews then held that Christ was to be the Saviour of Jews only. They might easily think so, for He was sent to them first. Here, however, we learn that while the healing stream has its source in Jerusalem, its waters are to flow through all nations. This mother was the first Gentile to whom Christ plainly opened the gate of mercy ; and her daughter was the first Gentile girl whom Christ healed. This story is, therefore, very specially for Gentile children, and most of all for Gentile girls. She is the first of a mighty multitude of Gentile children of every age and nation, whom Christ has freed from Satan's sway, and endowed with saving health. Thank God that He is willing to do for you as much as He did for her. And come to Him for every blessing He has to bestow.









MIRIAM and Rhoda are the only two girls of the Bible whose names we know. That fact alone should draw our attention to Rhoda, whose name has found a place in the stirring story of the early Church. Our Saviour told His disciples that they should be as lambs among wolves. They were as lambs in their seeming helplessness, yet each had the heart of a lion for boldness, but their enemies behaved like the meanest and cruellest of the beasts of prey. This chapter gives us a glimpse into their life. The scene is in Jerusalem, about ten years after the crucifixion of Christ. Herod was then king. He inherited the name, the throne, and the infamy of his grandfather Herod, who murdered the infants of Bethlehem. He began to vex the Church, slew the apostle James with the sword, and put Peter in prison, meaning soon to slay him. The Christians met for prayer in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark; and Rhoda was among them. A few words about her name may interest you. A learned German has written a book on "the names of women taken from

flowers." He shows that these names mark the qualities which we expect to find in girls. Now Rhoda is the Greek name for a rose. It is the first part of the word *Rhododendron*, which means rose-tree. In the olden times as now-a-days, people hoped that girls would be in the home what the rose is in the garden ; that they would add a charm, a beauty, and a sweet perfume to life. I have read somewhere that a rose is carved on a girl's tombstone in France, with these words underneath, "She was just like that." Among the discovered tombstones of the early Christians there is one of a little girl, with this inscription (I am quoting from memory) "Here rests the body of Novarina, who fell asleep in Jesus at the age of nine. She was as sweet as honey." The rose, however, is as famed for its speedy decay as for its sweetness and beauty. But when the ancients gave this name to their girls, they meant that, as they would wear, so they would justify and deserve their name all their days. Some, however, grow like the rose that has shed its leaves, and kept only its bare thorns. Others resemble the autumn flower, whose leaves are highly coloured while its sweet savour is gone. Some are like the rose into whose bud the cankerworm has crept ; some are like the rose planted among thorns, which shows its wounds as well as its beauty ; and some are even like the rose that is soiled and trampled in the dust of the highway. But Rhoda was a girl who deserved her beautiful name, and wore it well. For she was good ; and to be good is to be beautiful with the best

beauty. In old languages they used to call the bad ugly, and they do so in some parts of the world at this day. The good and the beautiful are really the same, when the matter is rightly understood. It is only when we have a wrong notion of beauty that we can use the poet's words,

"I slept and dreamt that life was beauty ;
I woke and found that life was duty."

The grace of God is the grand beautifier. It makes people *graceful*, that is both good and beautiful. Only the grace of God can shed a true beauty over your character, and endow it with a sweeter perfume than roses ever yielded. The girl who desires the true and lasting beauty suggested by Rhoda's name, must be like her in

I. Her Company.
II. Her Courage.
III. Her Service.

I. Rhoda's Company.—It is the very best in the world ; she is among the Christians ; she is the companion of the apostles. I cannot be sure whether she was the slave, or the daughter, or a relative, or a friend of Mary. Very likely she was the daughter, and as they had no servant, it would fall to her to answer the door. But, slave or daughter of Mary, it is plain that she was among the Christians not by chance, but by choice. I can prove that her whole heart was with them. They

were praying late at night; probably it was past midnight when Peter knocked at the door. If her heart had not been with the Christians she might have gone to bed, or fallen asleep, like Eutychus at the midnight meeting at Troas. But Peter had hardly done knocking when she was at the keyhole, asking who was there. She knew his voice at once in the dark. You see, then, that she was intimate with him, and probably had often heard him preaching. She was like a blind girl I know, who, unexpectedly hearing her old minister at a meeting, shook with excitement, and said aloud, "Oh, that's my minister." And Rhoda's gladness shows where her heart was. She lost her wits as older people sometimes do in a panic of joy; and, instead of opening the door, she left Peter out in the cold, and was so excited that they said to her, "Thou art mad." She was no hireling; she was thoroughly one of themselves. I believe she might have said of Peter and of Peter's Master what a great lady once said to Charles II. Her husband was suspected, and she owned that she had hid him. The king threatened to torture her unless she told where her husband was. "And will that do?" she asked. "Yes," replied the king, "I give you my word for it." "Then," said she, "I've hid him in my heart: there you'll find him."

What efforts many make to get into what they call "good society!" They would go through fire and water to be among people richer and more famous than themselves. This restlessness to be something which we are

not, causes a world of misery. But Rhoda easily gained admittance to the very best society in the world, to the very flower of human kind. She belonged to "the communion of saints," in which, according to the creed, you believe. They who come to Christ at once enter into the most splendid society in the world. They are one in heart with all the good, and shall be one with them in heaven for ever. Who would be foolish enough to shut herself out from that glorious band? Who would prefer the companionship of the Christless on earth and of the lost in the world to come? What a blessed company that must be which embraces the best of every age and nation, all God's heroes, and the noble army of the apostles and martyrs! Do you not wish to be among them?

Notice now—

II. Rhoda's Courage.—Every Christian then was a hero for God; for he ran the risk of poverty, prison, and death for Christ's name sake. It was so in this land two hundred years ago, when the heather was often dyed with the blood of our covenanting forefathers. In Rhoda's days it needed double courage to be a Christian in Jerusalem, for the maddest of the Jews lived there, and Herod's sword was always smoking with the blood of the saints. James, one of their leaders, had just been slain; and Peter was in prison, ready to be offered up. But is this the same Peter who, on the morning of our Lord's crucifixion, was cowed by a servant girl; and who thrice

denied his Master, and swore like a rough Galilean fisherman? It is the same man, but how changed! He can now defy men and devils for the sake of his dear Lord. His cowardice is a thing of the past, for he has now true views of Christ, and the Holy Spirit of promise has filled him with holy boldness. He flees not from his post, nor quails when Herod casts him into prison. He even sleeps soundly though bound to two soldiers, and expecting a martyr's death the next morning. His was the sweet sleep which God giveth to His beloved. Now all the early Christians had such courage. For they all knew that they were on God's side, and that he would not forsake them. And their holy companionship strengthened their courage. Each was supported by the sympathy of all. Peter in prison and Rhoda in her weakness would feel like Luther when he bade Melancthon be of good cheer, for, said he, "the women and the children are praying for us."

Rhoda, who shared the dangers, must have also shared the courage of the apostles. It was as much as her life was worth to attend that prayer-meeting. One small touch in her story gives us a hint of her dangers. When Peter knocked she did not open the door till she knew who was knocking: they were afraid of Herod's soldiers. Rhoda, I doubt not, was a timid girl by nature; but faith and prayer gave courage to her quailing breast. Persecution has passed away from our land, never to return, we believe. We read with the deepest indignation of those times, when in this land men and women and

children were dragged to prison and shot as felons, because they had met for the worship of God. We cannot be too thankful that such monstrous persecution is not possible now. But none the less on that account do you need the courage you admire in Rhoda. For mean false shame is one of the worst of your snares. It is always ruining souls, and tempting the young to do what they feel to be wrong. Pray that you may have the free and fearless spirit of those bold hymns which you love to sing: "Dare to be a Daniel; "Stand up for Jesus, firm as a rock on ocean's strand." Be ready with a round, rousing No, when sinners entice you. Be yours the spirit that can honestly confess,

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the glory of His cross,
And honour all His laws."

Consider next—

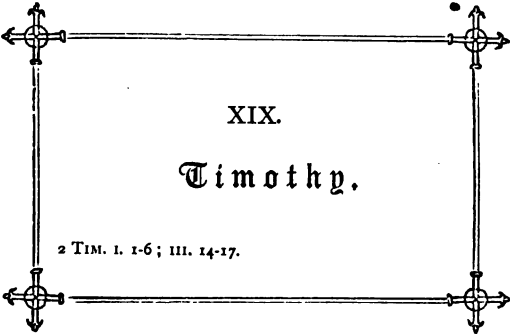
III. **Rhoda's Service.**—Though only a girl, we see her here doing service. It was very humble; for she was as one who keeps a door in the house of God. But she did her part, and did it right heartily. And God asks no more of you. An old writer thus closes his exposition of the widow's two mites cast into the Temple Treasury, "O Lord, I have but two mites, a soul and a body; and I gladly give both to Thee." That is a good prayer for any girl. You know that the angels are perfect servants of God, and this chapter

gives us a fine, full specimen of their way of serving. Watch the angel delivering Peter from prison, and take him as your model in doing God's work. How *swiftly* he works! He enters with the swiftness of the light, which forms his garment and fills the room: he touches Peter on the side, and says, "arise quickly." Yet is he in no hurry or confusion. See him helping Peter to put on his coat, and handing him his sandals, or shoes. Without a moment's delay he leads Peter out through all the gates into the street, and forthwith leaves him for another of God's errands. The name of that nameless angel, I can tell you, was not sluggard or idler anyhow. Though he has all eternity for his work-day, he does his work like one who has no time to lose. Most pictures give angels wings to denote the swiftness that belongs to a willing mind. Thus when Rhoda's heart was full of joy, she ran on her errand. Be this your resolve, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." Gratitude makes wings grow on the feet that walk in the way of life. And how *hum-bly* this angel does his work! Though one of the most exalted of creatures, he becomes the servant of the lowest and frailest. And he counts no service to man too humble for him. Though not of Peter's kind, yet how kind he was to Peter! He shows a minute, motherly care for him, and will not let him go out half dressed into the raw night air: he must first help him on with his clothes. Nor does he wait to survey his triumph, or taunt Herod's soldiers. The way of men is to carve

their names on their work ; but that is not the way of angels. This angel does not even mention his name, but hastens back to God, to whom he gives all the glory. What a warning against pride this very angel got on that dark day in heaven's history when many of his comrades were cast down to hell ! Perhaps the memories of that day help to make him abhor the faintest appearance of pride. And what a warning against pride was the end of this same king Herod ! We read in this chapter that he gave himself out as a god ; that he was immediately smitten by the angel of the Lord ; that he was then eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost. An old minister was once preaching a funeral sermon upon the death of an "elect lady," who had been his helper in Christ. She was angel-like in humility ; and he compared her to a fair taper in a room, which is bright to others, but is itself hid in the shade made by its own light. You too may have an angel's spirit in doing the work God has put into your hands. It is the spirit that tries to do God's will swiftly, humbly, and heartily. O our God, put this spirit within us, so that, in the great day, we may be welcomed to Thy holy habitation with these words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."







XIX.

Timothy.

2 TIM. I. 1-6; III. 14-17.





TIMOTHY must certainly have a place among our portraits of Bible children. He is one of the unblamed youths of the Bible. We know much about him ; but, so far as we know, he never spoke or did anything unbecoming. He ranks along with Abel, Joseph, Moses, Josiah, and Daniel. These form a sacred band of young immortals, who are an eternal example and encouragement to children. They were all of the same spiritual breed, of the same house and lineage. They show the fair fruit of a noble nature entirely under the power of grace. They rose as near “the summit of being” as is possible for man on earth. They were all marked by what I may call three loyalties, or loves, or reverences. They all loved with great reverence and loyalty their Bible, their home, and their Saviour.

Notice then—

- I. Timothy's Book.*
- II. Timothy's Home.*
- III. Timothy's Conversion.*



I. Timothy's Book.—His father was a Greek, and a heathen ; but his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois (who lived with them) were Jews and believers. They did their best for the godly upbringing of their boy ; and they would be left to do as they liked in the matter. For heathen fathers gave more attention to their young dogs and horses than to their young children. Books were then very scarce and dear, and probably the Old Testament was the only book in their house. They used it well, and found it to be a library in itself, and the best children's treasury. They were good Protestants, who loved the Bible, and believed that young and old should use it for themselves. They agreed with all the praises of the Bible in the Psalms of David. Timothy was an apt learner, and was famed for his Bible knowledge ; for the apostle says, "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." You may be sure that he knew the words of them, as the Pharisees did ; and that he knew the spirit of them, as the Pharisees did not. I fear you seldom heartily thank God for having the Bible in your mother tongue. Before the Reformation a preacher once asked, "What is truth?" Drawing the Bible out of his gown, he replied, "Here it is," then putting it into his pocket, he added, "but you can't read it ; it is a sealed book." The Holy Scriptures do not teach us all truth, but they teach us all the truth we need for our salvation ; they "are able to make thee wise unto salvation." We are like the lost babes in the wood, whom you have met with in the nursery story. With

the Bible in our hands we may find the way home, though we cannot make a map of all the dark corners of the forest in which we wander. How sad and perplexed we should be if we had not this book of the soul and of eternity, this book about Jesus Christ! We should then be like the babes in the wood when they grew weary in seeking the way, and laid them down in the darkness to die. Or we should be like the belated traveller over marshy ground, who follows wandering lights till he sinks in the quagmire. I do not wonder that the men now-a-days who do not believe the Bible are so very sad, when they are in earnest. A writer in one of our Reviews tells that he was studying the poems of Matthew Arnold, who believes not in a living God, but in a something or other, which somehow or other, at some time or other makes for righteousness. The sad and hopeless spirit of the poet passed for the time into the reviewer, and he felt most miserable. He went out for a walk. It was a bleak wintry day, and he was then at Brodick in Arran. The hills were in a winding sheet of snow, above which arose a ghastly array of clouds. The sky was of a leaden hue, and the sea was making its melancholy moan amid the jagged, dripping rocks. The gloom without joined the gloom within, and made him very wretched. He came upon some boys shouting merrily at play. "Are you at the school?" he asked. "Yes," was the reply. "And what are you learning?" "I learn," said one, "what is the chief end of man." "And what is it?" the reviewer asked. The boy replied, "Man's chief end is to glorify

God and to enjoy Him for ever." He at once felt that the boy was taught a religion of grandeur and joy, while the poet's was a religion of darkness and despair.

If you prize the Bible, you will think for yourself about what the Bible says. Even in his boyhood Timothy knew and understood the Holy Scriptures. Nothing astonishes me more than the discoveries one can make by studying the simplest verses of the Bible. Growing wonders will reward you when you search the Scriptures. I believe also that Timothy's loyal heart yielded itself up to the spirit and teachings of the Bible. It is of no use to know the Bible unless you give yourself up to its spirit. On his death-bed Adolphe Monod wrote "the regrets of a dying man," as he touchingly calls them. One of the saddest of his regrets was, that he had not from the first taken the Bible plan of life, and the Bible means of reaching it. I warn you that, if you do not take the Bible as your guide from your youth, you will bitterly regret your mistake when you lay your head on your dying pillow. If you take the Bible for your guide, your whole life will be shaped by the "faith which is in Christ Jesus."

II. Timothy's Home.—The boy would be strongly tempted to follow his dashing heathen father, whose amusements would be such as boys most delight in; yet he sided with, and took after his devout mother and grandmother. That fact speaks volumes for him. Timothy has become very real to me; and I believe

that he gladly gave himself up to all the best influences of his home. Thus his mother was his mother thrice over, for she gave life to his mind, and to his soul, as she had given life to his body. I believe that loving loyalty to his parents rose in him to something like genius. His was the highest of all the kinds of genius: it was the genius not of the head, but of the heart and soul: he was a moral and spiritual genius. I am speaking of something that goes far beyond obedience. Obedience is only one of the outward signs of the true spirit of a child. A girl once heard a sermon upon this subject. On the way home, feeling uneasy, she said, "Mother, do I always obey you?" "Yon know best yourself, my dear," the mother replied. "Well, I never disobey you," the girl continued, "I always do what you bid me, but I sometimes *go slow*." The Bible shows concern chiefly about the kind and spirit of your obedience. "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*." The fifth commandment bids you honour your parents in some sense as you honour God. The apostle says (Hebrews xii. 9) that they had given reverence to their fathers on earth, that is, they had discovered and owned something divine in them. This is probably the reason why piety now means the whole of religion, while, long ago, it meant only faithful love to parents. It has that meaning in the only place where it is used in the Bible. "Let them learn to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents" (1 Timothy iv. 4). It is interesting to notice that this verse was written by Timothy. The

right feeling to parents is so like the right feeling to God, that people have used one word for both. Obedience is only one fruit of that feeling. For the day will come when your parents will not command, and you shall not need to obey, but the day will never come when you shall not require to reverence them. I believe that Timothy's spirit so made him one with his parents, that he had no interests of his own apart from theirs. Nothing is nobler in a family than the spirit which makes them true to one another, and ready to share their last sixpence; but the youth who selfishly separates himself from "his own," is already a ruin. I remember visiting a mother whose son had (shocking to relate) robbed her, and entered on shameful courses. She could not sleep at night, she told me; her hair had turned grey from grief; the very sun in summer seemed gloomy; when she thought of her boy she could not keep down the beatings of her heart; when her bell was rung she began to tremble and perspire. I once visited another mother in a quiet country nook. As she did not know me, I told her that I had called as I was her daughter's pastor; and I said that no member in our church was more respected. The sweet tears she shed from joy were more than the bitter tears of her neighbour. When she recovered speech, she told me that her daughter was denying herself daily that she might give every comfort to her widowed mother. Earth and sky were spendidly beautiful that day, but their beauty was as dust, compared with the beauty of that girl's dutifulness. No

human anguish is keener than a mother's forsaken by her own child, while loyalty like Timothy's makes her heart sing for joy.

I hold that the noblest characters are found among those men who in youth yielded most to a mother's influence. You will find many striking proofs of my view in such books as Smiles' "Self-help," and "Character." The reason is soon found. Boys like Timothy unite in their characters what is best in man and woman. They are rich in spirit beyond others, for Nature gives them manly strength, to which a mother's influence adds tenderness and sweetness. They thus excel both in brain power and in heart power; both in judgment and in feeling. They have the strength and beauty which round character into completeness. A well-known writer has said, "In my best moments I find again my mother in myself." Usually man is the son of woman in his best gifts. "A kiss from my mother," said West, "made me a painter." To love your mother well, then, is a liberal education of head and heart. And you shall love your mother rightly, if you have the spirit of Timothy, or rather of Timothy's Saviour, Whom even the agonies of the cross, the great work of redemption, and the near prospect of glory did not separate from His mother, and Who, before He gave up the ghost, said unto her, "Woman, behold thy son."

III. Timothy's Conversion.—Some, like Samuel, cannot remember a time when they did not trust God.

Their love to the Saviour is not an after-love, but a first love. Others, like Timothy, have a well-marked and a well-remembered conversion. They can more easily give you the date and place of their second birth, than of their first. "Where were you born?" a bishop once asked Summerfield. "At Liverpool and Dublin," he replied. But you need not trouble yourself in the least about the date and place of your conversion: only make sure that you are converted, and that your life shows it. Timothy was very religious, knew his Bible well, was dutiful at home, was outwardly blameless; and yet he was not converted. For Paul calls him "my own son in the faith, . . . whom I have begotten in the gospel." Plainly then he was not converted till he heard Paul's preaching. We wonder that God gave this honour not to his mother, but to the preacher. The new life in her well-beloved boy would make her too glad to find any fault with the instrument God had used; and she would say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Often the successful preacher but reaps what the mother had sowed, and watered with her prayers, and brought to the verge of harvest. Timothy would probably have described his conversion thus,—“on such a day two strangers from Jerusalem appeared in our synagogue at Lystra. The one was a very fine looking man, and the other was an eloquent speaker. He gave us a new explanation of the Old Testament, and proved that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified at Jerusalem, was the Messiah promised to my fathers. He made it so

plain that I could not help believing with him. Then he offered us salvation in the name of Christ Jesus, and pled with us to repent at once and believe on Him. I there and then yielded my heart to the Saviour; and I have since lived a new life, every day of which has added to my faith and peace."

Timothy must have been a mere boy at the time of his conversion. For he was quite young when he was ordained, and even when Paul wrote his epistle to him, he was so boyish-looking that people might easily despise his youth. It should seem that he was converted at least seven years before his ordination. Youthful piety, then, is a fact. How many cases of it can you count up among Bible children? It would interest you to write down their names. Leaving that to you, I will give you a few modern cases of early conversion. I have visited some parts of America in company with one who was gathering facts about its great preachers and professors. At Princeton we saw the graves of nine of the Presidents of the college. These men were, like Timothy, the founders and leaders of churches. Seven out of the nine were converted in boyhood. At Andover we saw the grave of another apostle, Dr. Justin Edwards, who owed his conversion under God to Phebe Bartlet, when she was seventy years of age. Jonathan Edwards gives an account of the conversion of Phebe Bartlet: she was then four years and five months old. The conversion of children is a world-wide fact. Let that be a settled point with you. The time shall never

come when Christ shall have no lambs in His fold. If your conversion be delayed, you will have sadly to confess,

“Alas, that I so lately knew Thee,
Thee so worthy of the best ;
Nor had sooner turned to know Thee,
Truest good and only rest.
The more I love, I mourn the more,
That I did not love before.”

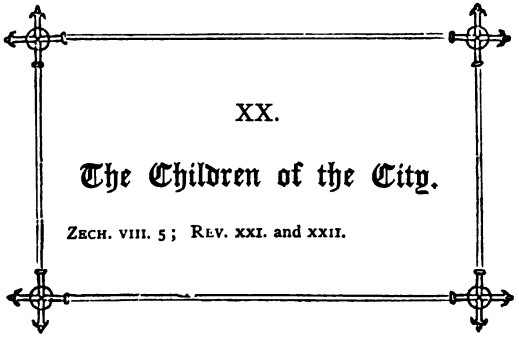
Every year of delay makes it less likely that you will ever come to Christ at all. Those who are converted late in life are like the brand plucked from the burning, which is at best a charred fragment, whence hissing sparks will issue now and again. His early conversion was one chief reason why Timothy did so much good, and why he still remains such an inviting example of grace. It made him like Newton, of whom Bishop Burnet says, that he had the whitest soul he ever knew, and was as a very infant in purity of mind. Than youthful piety God has no better gift for you but heaven. Do not forget that Timothy's charming character was formed by the union of the three Loyalties or Reverences. His many fine qualities won for him the apostle's love, which seems to have passed the love of women. Paul declared that he had no other like-minded, or *equal-souled*. The faithful young convert received the apostle's soul into his own: Paul lived in him, and he in Paul. Only men of the noblest nature and the most gracious lives are capable of calling forth, or returning such sympathy and affection. As he got much from Paul, he gave much to him. He

was to the apostle what Joshua was to Moses : his hearty energy gladdened the aged apostle with the prospect of a succession of true believing hearts.

I pray that God may raise up among us many chosen children of Timothy's mould. I would fain do with some energetic boys what a minister did to a young man. Laying his hand upon the youth's shoulder, he looked him in the face, and said "John, you should be with us." The words sunk into John's heart, who soon came boldly out on God's side. I hope that many of our boys shall not be overcome by the vulgar greed of gold. God grant that many of them may be like Timothy in their early conversion, and in their resolution to devote their lives to the spreading of the blessed gospel among men. Perhaps the work of Christ never was more interesting than it is now in many quarters of the world. I cannot believe that the boy who, moved by the love of Christ and of men, chooses the work which Timothy chose, will ever regret his choice. If he gives himself heart and soul to it, he will soon be persuaded that no other kind of work is fitted to give him more joy or a richer reward. But whatever your work may be, let it all be done for the glory of God ; and may God accept you and it in that great day. AMEN.







XX.

The Children of the City.

ZECH. VIII. 5 ; REV. XXI. and XXII.





ZECHARIAH'S heart is plainly in the sight he describes. Gladness grows in him as he watches in vision the children at play, and hears their ringing laughter. And his spirit is the spirit of the Bible, which everywhere shows the warmest interest in the joys of children. The Bible writers have many touches of that tenderness for the young which breathed in Christ when He said to Peter, "Feed my lambs," or, as we might put it literally in Scotch, "my wee lammies." You have no idea how much you owe to the Bible. Every religion has its sacred books, but the Bible is the only sacred book in the world that takes a deep interest in the young. Who of the world's teachers but Christ took children in his arms, laid his hands upon them and blessed them? Our Saviour boasts (if we may say so) of the place given to children in His kingdom. He thanked the Father that the things hid from the wise had been revealed unto babes. He declared that only those who became as a little child could enter into His kingdom. He rebuked the

disciples who chide the children for singing hosannas to Him. "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" It seems then that He thinks His praise imperfect when there are no little voices in the choir. The religion of Christ has quite changed the thoughts and feelings of men about children. There is no reading for the child in any nation where the Bible is not the book of books. That great gush of sweet song for the young, whence comes it? All its well-springs are in the Bible. It is Christ who has taught men to be human-hearted, and to show mercifulness to children. It is Christ who has taught men to treat children as if they were "little majesties," that is, little kings and queens. And how do children fare where the Bible is not known? I heard Dr. Carstairs Douglas say that in China he was one day explaining the sixth commandment in the open air. He said it meant, thou shalt not kill even children. A Chinaman stepped forward, and shouted, "What, do you mean to say, that we cannot kill our own children! I have killed five of mine, and I had a perfect right to do it." All the people there agreed with him. Another missionary writes that in the city where he labours there is a place called "the child's ditch," into which parents throw the children they do not wish to bring up. I think he also says that it is never empty. The very best teachers of the world, who had not the Bible, felt no loving concern for children. None of them dwells with delight upon his home-life in boyhood, hardly one of

them says a single word about his mother. When a child was born in a Greek or Roman home, it was laid at the father's feet. If he stooped down and took it in his arms it became a member of the family : if he left it unnoticed it was often cast out to die, or be devoured by wild beasts. For the first seven or eight years the children rarely saw their father's face, who, till they came of age, had the power of putting them to death. Yet some of these fathers were so well educated, that thousands of the learned still read their writings with delight. You do indeed owe your childhood, all its kindness and happiness, to Jesus Christ, the Lover of children. He has placed them among the beloved on earth and the blessed in heaven. His city shall resound in every corner with the glad voices of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Jerusalem was the city of God on earth, and the picture of the city of God in heaven. War had laid it waste in Zechariah's day: the old men and children, who could neither fight nor flee, had been slain; and grass was growing in its deserted streets. Our text gives a glimpse of the joyous life that should pour its tide into every corner of it in the better days coming: "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Jerusalem at its best, not at its worst, is the image of the heavenly city. In heaven, then, there shall be a mighty multitude of happy children. The poet Wordsworth, according to a tradition very common in Pagan lands, describes us as having been carried hither

to earth from an heavenly island by an immortal sea. Though we be far inland, we are not so far but that, in a season of calm weather, we may have a sight of our soul's native land,

“ And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

Joyous children have a large place in the splendid vision of the prophet, as in that of the poet. God, who has made children to be happy on earth, has also made for them a happy city above. I shall borrow some of my illustrations from the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation, which is the Book of God's city.

I wish to speak of—

I. The Glory of the City.

II. The Citizens.

III. The Gate of the City.

I. The Glory of the City.—What mind is vast enough to grasp all its glories !

Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation,
Sink mind and heart opprest.

It is said that the poet Burns used to weep when he read about the glories of the city. I can notice only two or three of its glories.

1. There is *perfect safety* in it: it is a walled or fortified city. Once all the cities in our country were walled

cities. The walls of some cities, as of York and Chester, are still standing. One of the best specimens of a walled city you can see, is Conway in North Wales. War made safety the first glory of a city. The song of the redeemed is, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." They cannot find words strong enough to express their eternal safety, and they speak as if salvation were the stuff, the very brick and mortar, with which its walls are built. And there is safety from dangers within as well as from dangers without. It must be awful to live in a city full of terrors, like St. Petersburg, where the Emperor rides in an iron clad carriage amid hundreds of armed men. But Jerusalem above is the city of peace and salvation.

2. It also contains everything needed for *life and joy*. Its inhabitants never need to fetch any provision into it. The fountain and river of life are there. Within the reach of all grows the tree of life, with all manner of fruits. The riches of the city cannot be told. Its pavement is of pure gold, and all the stones in its walls and gates are of infinite value and duration. Death cannot enter its gates, nor any curse, nor any sorrow, nor any darkness.

3. The *King* is the centre of the city. Near the Rhine stands the city of Carlsruhe, or Charles' Rest, so called after its founder. It has the shape of an outspread fan, and all the streets branch out from the palace, in front of which stands the bronze statue of the grand Duke. I know not another city which so fills the

visitor's mind with the name, image, and doings of its founder. In almost every street the children at play can see the shining image of the Prince. It gives us a poor hint of the way in which the Prince of Peace fills the City of Peace with His sacred presence. The living Christ is everywhere and everything in the heavenly Jerusalem. He fills it as the sun fills the world at noon. "The Lamb is the light of it." Let the city take a firm hold upon your mind and imagination. Take delight in all the verses, and in all our sweetest hymns about it : believe that all possible glories meet in it : rejoice that it is the home of your loved ones who have died in the Lord ; and thank God that you may walk its golden streets in their company. For consider now who are—

II. The Citizens of the City.—A city derives its glory more from the people than from the places in it. A beautiful city without any citizens would look more desolate than any desert. But old and young, rich and poor of every age and nation shall throng the shining streets of the city of our God. It lieth foursquare upon the everlasting hills, and its length is equal to its breadth : it has a side for all comers and all quarters alike : it is an universal city, into which they shall stream from the North, and the South, and the East, and the West. Little children who have died in infancy shall be there. Though the Bible does not give us many full statements, it gives us many great suggestions about them. For instance, in all Christ's parables of the

judgment we find not one hint about little children : only those who were old enough to think and act for themselves stand before the great white throne. The apostle Paul would teach us, that, as they died in Adam, so they shall be made alive in Christ. They died through the act of the first Adam, of which they knew nothing ; and so they live through the act of the second Adam, of which also they knew nothing. Thus where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound, as I have seen the abounding sand at the coast covered at full tide by the superabounding sea. Sin abounded in the brief sufferings and early deaths of these infants, and grace shall much more abound in the never-ending life it brings them. I found the following words on a tombstone over the grave of three infants :—

“ Bold infidelity, turn pale and die ;
Beneath this stone three infants’ ashes lie ;
Say, are they lost or saved ?
If death’s by sin, they sinned, for they lie here ;
If heaven’s by works, in heaven they can’t appear.
Reason, ah, how depraved !
Revere the Bible’s sacred page, the knot’s untied ;
They died, for Adam sinned—they live, for Jesus died.”

We may believe that the children in the city will far outnumber the full grown citizens. “ The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls.” When our Saviour says, “ Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” He may mean that they will form by far the greater part. But our text speaks of boys and girls old

enough for play. The streets shall be full of them ; and they shall be full of gladness. A child's happiest hours are spent at play in the genial sunshine with his favourite companions. Children's games, it is said, are prophecies, as showing the tastes and bent of children. Thus great generals usually played at war in their boyish games, and some who figure in history as the greatest tyrants used to amuse themselves in boyhood by killing flies, and torturing animals. For "childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day." Zechariah makes your games prophecies not only of manhood and womanhood, but of your immortality. Your games are among the signs of heaven that lie about you in your childhood. If you connect your games with my subject, then your play will preach to you about heaven, where life is all joy. They will give you a hint that the religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of joy in heaven, and should be a religion of joy on earth. They will then make you abhor such a view of life as the poet's, who sings,

"Just like a child in ocean's arms,
We strive against the stream,
Each moment further from the shore,
Where life's young fountains gleam,
Each moment fainter wax the fields,
And wider rolls the sea ;
The mist grows dark, the sun goes down,
Day breaks—and *where are we?*"

God means heaven to begin in your heart now, and to remain there without any break. The words of the

poet upon the death of his minister should be true of every Christian :—

“Of this blest man, let this just praise be given,
Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.”

It is a thousand pities that we are so apt to put a great gulf between the heaven here and the heaven above. The word of God is always telling us that the two are most closely united. For on earth you should be in spirit the children of heaven.

“Then set not in thy thoughts too far
Our heaven and earth apart,
Lest thou should'st wrong the heaven begun
Already in thy heart.”

Of the peculiar joys of heaven we are told little ; and that little we cannot well understand. For the joy of heaven is infinite ; and what can we say about the infinite, but that it is infinite ? Yet by two or three stepping stones we may reach some just notion of that life, compared with which our present life is a poor dying thing. To begin with, the citizen of heaven has a perfect body. He knows no disease or languor. He never has to say, “I'm weary, oh, I'm wearied.” He has all the rapture of perfect health. His resurrection body is refined and ennobled in all its parts ; his body is, as it were, all soul. Then his mind is freed from all ignorance and dulness. And every taint of sin and imperfection has been removed from his soul, which has been raised to the height of its perfection. Behold the blessedness of heaven ! a sinless soul wedded to an immortal body, and served by a perfect mind. It is the blessedness of our whole

nature; and it shall never end. O my soul, is that blessedness thine? O my God, keep me by Thy grace.

We will now examine—

III. **The Gate of the City.**—You do well to ask, “Shall I get into the city?” For many shall be shut out, and many shall be shut out who expected to get in. To be shut out from such joys, to be shut out to *what!* We should be like the children, whose hearts are melted with pity as they read about these outcasts. Jesus, Who is all compassion, has spoken some awful words upon this subject. He has been at great pains to show us the outside as well as the inside of the Holy City, that we may be driven by fear as well as drawn by love within its gates. The apostle of love closes the New Testament with a sad list of the outcasts from the city. Look at that list in the last two chapters of Revelation: let your eye rest on the top and bottom of it. “The fearful” head the list. They are the cowards, who fear man more than God, who dare not do the right when others laugh at and oppose them. Are you never tempted to be fearful on the side of God? Thrice over the list closes with liars; “and all liars” (Rev. xxi. 8); “whosoever maketh a lie” (Rev. xxi. 27); and “whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. xxii. 15). These three verses justify the saying, “better die than lie.” Yet some children are more inclined to lies than to other sins. “Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth” (Zech. viii. 3), and the God of truth again and again

declares that all speakers, makers, and lovers of lies shall be shut out of the city. God has so fashioned us, that the conscience has a strange power of tormenting liars. I was lately applied to for the address of an aged woman, whose brother died in England forty-nine years ago. His partner then loved, and made, and spoke a lie : he so managed the estate as to cheat the sister out of £400. He has since made a large fortune in a foreign land where he now lives. But that lie has created a hell in his heart. He can hope for no peace, he writes, till he has confessed his sin, and restored the money. The God of conscience is also the God of the Bible, and He teaches you to hate the shadow of a lie, and to keep by the truth at all hazards.

It is more delightful to follow those who are within the city. Mark well the gate by which they enter in. It is not the gate of the law, nor the gate of good works, nor the gate of the Church, nor the gate of baptism : it is the gate of free grace. It is never shut (Rev. xxi. 25), and over it are inscribed these words, "Come . . . whosoever will." As it is "the holy city," none but penitents enter in. Rowland Hill used to say, "If I were permitted to drop a tear on the golden street, as I enter the city of my God, it would be a tear of regret at bidding an eternal farewell to my beloved and life-long companion, penitence." Penitence accompanied him to the very gate of the city, for all the children of Zion have been the children of sin. Again, only those who have loved holiness on earth can enter into the city of holiness ;

for the multitude within it must needs be of one mind and of one heart. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gate, into the city." Thus the greatest sinner, who repents, forsakes his sins, and puts his trust in Christ, shall be enrolled among the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. For while its walls shut out all lovers of sin, its gate admits all sinners who come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God that the day of mercy is not past, and that the gate of mercy still stands open ; and enter in by hearty faith in the Saviour of sinners.

THE END.

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